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Special Education Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Their Readiness to Serve Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Students

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Special Education Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Their Readiness to Serve Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Students

by

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Special Education Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Their Readiness to Serve Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Students

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The provision of effective special education services for exceptional students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds requires teachers to consider a student's disability in the context of his or her socio-cultural and linguistic characteristics. Although research in special education documents the perceptions and beliefs of preservice teachers about diversity, studies are needed which examine the perceptions of preservice teachers about their readiness to work with diverse exceptional learners as they prepare to enter the profession. In view of the fact that teachers' instructional decisions are influenced by their perceptions and assumptions about their CLD students, such

research has the potential to inform teacher education program content and design.

This qualitative study employed naturalistic inquiry methods to examine the perceptions of four special education student teachers' about their preparation to teach in multicultural settings. Specifically, guiding questions explored participants' understandings about culture, their multicultural knowledge and skills, and their readiness to work successfully with CLD populations. Participants were student teaching in culturally/linguistic diverse classrooms in a large, urban school district in the Southwest. Two formal interviews, and weekly observations and debriefings over the duration of their placement comprised the primary sources of data. Student teaching evaluations and written feedback from the cooperating teacher and university supervisor, and self-evaluations were also reviewed. Interview and observation data were analyzed for common themes using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Trustworthiness was established by using prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, the maintenance of a reflexive journal and member checks.

All four participants felt prepared to work effectively in classrooms with CLD exceptional students. Though they affirmed the importance of experiences in diverse settings, they demonstrated a limited awareness of culture or its influence on teaching and learning. Their limited cross-cultural competence appeared to be reinforced by their positive evaluations and the instructional behaviors of their

cooperating teachers. These findings illustrate the complexity of preparing teachers to work with CLD exceptional students. Implications for future research and teacher education are presented, including recommendations related to program design, the selection of cooperating teachers, and the evaluation of student teachers.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The idea for this study was generated from a strong personal interest of my own that began soon after I began my teaching career. I know that my experiences and my understanding of the impact of culture affect what I see and do not see in the classroom or any other research context. As a Mexican-American woman, former teacher of students with disabilities who are from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds, former supervisor of special education student teachers working with CLD students, and currently an assistant principal at a culturally diverse campus, the need to prepare beginning teachers to work effectively with all students continues to be essential to me.

Before returning to graduate school to begin the doctoral program, I was a teacher in a large high school for three years. I taught both special education and English as a Second Language. While teaching there, I encountered several experienced teachers who were inadequately prepared to work with students from cultural and linguistic backgrounds different from their own. While I truly believe they had the best of intentions trying to be as effective as they could with all their students, often, their labors were fruitless. This would lead to frustration on their part and eventually to stereotyping certain groups of students because they were

not successful, despite these teachers' best efforts. This is what initially prompted my return to graduate school.

As a full-time doctoral student, I worked part-time as a university supervisor of student teachers for the Special Education department for four years. In that position, I had the opportunity to observe numerous student teachers, most of who were White, work and interact with CLD students. This only served to increase my interest in how we, as a department, could better prepare these prospective teachers to work effectively with the diverse student populations they would encounter as they entered the teaching profession. I know from working in my special education department and being familiar with much of the special education undergraduate course content, that the department is actively trying to make teachers more aware of the socio-cultural influences on teachers' and students' behavior and learning. I am also very aware of the lack of empirical support for successful preservice teacher programs designed to equip teachers to work with diverse student populations. I am hoping that my study of student teachers' perceptions of culture, its influence on student behavior, and their perceptions about their readiness to serve diverse students with special needs will inform these teacher education efforts so that future preservice teachers can be prepared to be successful with all their students.

The primary responsibility of teacher education programs is to provide preservice teachers with a preparation program designed to ensure their acquisition of the appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for positive interactions with all their students and families, including those from CLD backgrounds. Teacher education is defined by Yarger and Smith (1990) as "the context and process of educating individuals to become effective teachers or better teachers" (p. 26). One of the most complex goals in the field of education is preparing new teachers to work with students who are racially, ethnically, linguistically, and economically different from themselves (Pugach & Seidl, 1998; Webb-Johnson, Artiles, Trent, Jackson, & Velox, 1998). Much has been written in the last decade about multicultural teacher preparation, the changing demographics of the student population, and the continuing trend for preservice teachers to be middle-class, White females. As the student population grows increasingly diverse, the fact that they are being taught by a teaching force that continues to be primarily White becomes even more significant (Artiles, Trent, Hoffman-Kipp, & Lopez-Torres, 2000; Bynoe, 1998; Webb-Johnson et al., 1998). This cultural disparity tends to result in cultural clashes in schools.

Teacher educators are now more aware of the relationship between students' success and their teachers' abilities to cross cultural boundaries (Pugach & Seidl, 1998). However, both general and special educators have a significant

lack of awareness and knowledge of how culture, race, and class affect education. Pugach & Seidl (1998) describe the critical implications this lack of understanding of the influence of culture, race, and class has for the field of special education.

> For many people in general and for educators in particular, the influences of race, culture, and class on one's life and education remain a largely unexamined and entangled relationship. When teachers do not share a common set of experiences or a common language with their students, and when they lack awareness of the role of race, culture, and class in determining behavior and development, they are more likely to misinterpret the behavior of children and/or define that behavior or development as deficient or abnormal. This occurs in general and special education alike and is often what results in children being seen as needing special education. (p. 325)

In looking for better ways to prepare special education teachers, we must look beyond the field of special education. Pugach (1996) discusses the need for special educators to collaborate with those in the field of multicultural education so that special educators can have a greater understanding of diversity and the role disability plays. This collaboration is even more essential because the construct

of diversity has often been narrowly defined in special education to represent diverse abilities (Pugach, 1996; 2001).

The misconception of disability as diversity is adversely affecting the field of special education. Cultural diversity has been viewed as one of a series of diversity 'concerns' or diversity 'problems' which leads to a view of cultural diversity as a deficit. This misunderstanding will continue until special educators are willing to view the current interpretations of the relationship between disability and diversity as problematic. Instead, cultural diversity should be addressed as a key feature as all other student needs—including disability—are considered and assessed (Pugach & Seidl, 1996). The limited view of disability as diversity has been held by several special education scholars; disability is often addressed in isolation, outside of its full sociocultural context (Pugach, 2001). Special educators routinely describe disability as an example of diversity, similar to linguistic, ethnic, racial and economic diversity. In fact, disability is often one of the differences listed in the description of diversity in several recent texts on special education and inclusive practices (Pugach & Seidl, 1998). In their definition of cultural diversity, Sileo and Prater (1998) also include "persons with disabilities" as one of the various groups that make up our total society. A real risk in the disability/diversity analogy is that special educators believe that because they work with students with disabilities, they are already considering the

diverse needs of their students (Pugach & Seidl, 1998). Special educators are ill-prepared to provide culturally sensitive instruction and continue to select strategies and plan instruction based on the student's disability with little consideration for the cultural and linguistic background of the student (Hayes & Price, 2000). "Teacher education within special education must rethink its role and retool its practices so that the changes yield equity in learning opportunities for all children" (Bynoe, 1998, p. 38).

The Need for a Multicultural Special Education Theoretical Framework for Teacher Education

Although much has been written about multicultural education in recent years, according to literature review conducted for this study, the majority of this literature addresses theoretical matters, and few efforts to systematically study the long-term effects of multicultural teacher preparation have been made. The few studies that have been published are either descriptions of programs, studies that contain little empirical data, or studies that are written from the teacher educator's point of view. The knowledge base in multicultural preservice teacher education is unable to provide answers to numerous practical questions such as what is the most effective way to prepare teachers to work with students from cultural and linguistic backgrounds different from their own. Indeed, Gay (1995) and Ladson-

Billings (1995b) note the considerable gap between the rhetoric and the practice of multicultural education.

The research in the area of multicultural special education is even more limited. Artiles and Trent (1997) identify three factors that limit the research in the area of multicultural education and special education: isolation of special educators from general educators which prevents them from benefiting from the emerging knowledge base in general education; the limited political and financial support given to multicultural special education; and the ambivalent position of administrators and policy makers about multicultural education, given continuing controversy about this topic. An urgent need exists to refine the theoretical frameworks and methodologies being used to analyze the impact of teacher preparation programs preparing regular and special education teachers to work with diverse students (Trent & Artiles, 1998). An analysis of teacher preparation programs is essential to validate the knowledge and skills new teachers need to provide effective instruction for the students found in today's classrooms. It is necessary to plan program changes based on empirical evidence. Artiles & Trent (1997) contend "that it is dangerous to continue discussing and implementing multicultural education policies (including special education teacher education) if they are not based on sound empirical evidence" (p. 277).

Cultural Discontinuities Between Students and Educators

A critical consideration in this discussion is the demographics of both the teaching force and the student population. Preparing a mostly White teaching force to teach a student population that is growing increasingly diverse is a difficult task that teacher educators are now confronting (Webb-Johnson, et al., 1998). The resulting cultural incongruence has critical implications for CLD students with special needs. Many CLD students underachieve as a result of cultural discontinuities between teachers and students (Greenfield, Raeff, & Quiroz, 1995). The demographic trends of both the teaching force and the student population are not likely to change dramatically in the near future, resulting in the continued cultural mismatch between teachers and their students (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Thus, it is essential to examine how teacher preparation programs can better prepare new teachers to work with the increasingly diverse student population.

Instructional Implications of Culture, Language and Disability

The first priority of special educators is the provision of an appropriate education for all children with disabilities (Public Law 94-142). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was amended in 1997 to better ensure access to an appropriate education for all children. All children come to the educational setting with a myriad of characteristics that must be considered by a teacher. Teachers of

CLD students need to understand the cultural setting in which the school is located and feel comfortable with their own cultural background before they are able to develop effective instructional strategies (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998). In order to design effective instruction for a child with a disability, three major learner characteristics must be considered: culture, language, and disability (Cloud, 1993).

Culture is a complex construct that has been defined in numerous ways. Generally, it is defined as a group's way of knowing and interacting with their world. Culture is also said to provide "the blueprint that determines the way we think, feel and behave in society" (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998, p. 4). Thus, culture directly impacts the interactions between the school system and families. According to Hollins (1996), educators can define culture in one of three ways: as artifact or behavior, as social and political relationships, or as affect, behavior, and intellect. Hollins (1996) also maintains that the cultural views held by educators often shape how they define culture, its relationship to political beliefs, their conceptualization of school learning, and curricular and instructional approaches.

The cultural backgrounds of students and teachers can have several critical implications in the classroom. Culture affects how students will interact with the teacher and other students in the class. Prior to the identification of a student with

a disability, it is important for teachers to understand the influence of culture on a child's behavior. This may help prevent an inappropriate referral for special education services (Garcia & Ortiz, 1988; Artiles & Ortiz, 2002). Once a student has been identified as needing special education services, the cultural background of a student and his/her family has a tremendous impact on how the family will interact with the school. Special educators need to be aware that diverse social and cultural groups have differing ideas of what is considered a disability and how that disability should be addressed (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1999; Pugach & Seidl, 1998). How a family defines disability is also likely to affect how they will participate in the provision of services for their child. If these services are provided in a manner that is responsive to the families' cultural background, then they are more likely to be implemented by the family (Garcia, Perez, & Ortiz, 2000; Lynch & Hanson, 1998).

Language also has important instructional implications. Children are introduced to meaningful language through interactions with members of their families, or their cultural group (Garcia, Perez, & Ortiz, 2000). Students' language characteristics such as oral language and literacy levels, language use patterns, and language preference should be accommodated in the provision of services (Garcia & Malkin, 1993). Research has shown the strong interrelationship between the literacy level of a learner in his/her first language

and the acquisition of literacy in a second language (Thonis, 1989). In order to benefit from instruction, students must be able to comprehend the language in which instruction is being provided. Teachers also need to be aware of how language status affects children's language use patterns and thus, their school achievement. It is vital that children with disabilities are able to develop literacy in their primary language seeing as literacy in their first language provides the foundation for the acquisition of English (Cloud, 1993). In order for special education services to be effective for second language learners, these services must be provided in their native language, or at a minimum, be offered using ESL approaches to ensure that instruction is meaningful.

Finally, the instructional implications of disability are also significant. Children with disabilities present a wide range of learning problems that stem from an underlying sensory or cognitive impairment. Both the nature and the extent of the disability must be considered when planning appropriate intervention strategies. "This is a basic tenet of special education which certainly holds true for CLD learners" (Cloud, 1993, p. 67). To maximize the effectiveness of the intervention programs for CLD students who also have disabilities, it is vital to consider culture, language and disability characteristics when designing intervention programs.

Professional Standards for the Preparation of Special Educators

As the field of teacher preparation becomes more aware of the educational needs of students from diverse backgrounds, several professional organizations have developed standards that address cultural diversity. Under the General Provisions of the Texas Education Code (δ227.01), the education profession has the responsibility of attracting and retaining candidates for certification who are able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to improve the performance of students from diverse backgrounds in the state of Texas. The National Council on the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) requires that all teachers be prepared for cultural diversity. Similarly, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards requires teachers to demonstrate a respect for cultural diversity in their assessment of identifying accomplished teachers.

With respect to special education professional standards, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has identified a list of essential knowledge and skills, referred to as the Common Core of Knowledge and Skills, for new special education teachers (The Council for Exceptional Children, 2000). CEC has continued to update its recommendations for the CEC Common Core of Knowledge and Skills to reflect this awareness of the responsibility to address the needs of diverse learners. Each of the eight core areas speaks to critical aspects of diversity (See Appendix A for a listing of specific knowledge and skills related to

diversity). According to the Council for Exceptional Children, to be qualified to enter the profession, new special education teachers should have the knowledge and skills described in each core area. As these elements of diversity from these professional standards begin to be integrated into teacher education programs, it is imperative to document the design and content of such programs as well as to evaluate their success.

Programs for Teachers of CLD Students

Beyond the knowledge and skills included in professional standards, teacher educators have designed training programs or developed several sets of competencies that address appropriate services for CLD learners with disabilities (e.g., Burstein & Sears, 1998; Cummins, 1989; Garcia & Malkin, 1993; Kea & Utley, 1998; Valles, 1998). In order for preservice teachers to become more efficacious in teaching culturally diverse students and preparing future teachers to live in a democratic, multicultural society, the entire teacher education program must work together toward that goal (Cockrell, Placier, Cockrell, & Middleton, 1999). However, teaching about diversity, equity, and other issues related to multicultural education is not an easy task (Marshall, 1994). Thus, it is necessary to study teacher preparation programs to determine which programs have been successful at incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs new

teachers need to provide effective instruction for all students found in today's classrooms.

Pederson (1994) discusses a three-pronged model for promoting multicultural understanding. The three areas of multicultural competencies are awareness, knowledge, and skill. Developing a critical awareness of self and others is the first step. Many preservice teachers are unaware of how their personal histories and experiences may affect their teaching in the classroom (Holt-Reynolds, as cited in Bynoe, 1998). The second prong of Pederson's model involves the acquisition of factual knowledge of cultural groups. The final prong of Pederson's model is possible when educators have an understanding of themselves, an awareness of the sociopolitical realities, and knowledge of the specific cultural factors that influence the students they are working with so that they are able to select culturally sound, ethically appropriate educational practices to enhance learner outcomes for all students.

Gay (1993) also proposes a framework to equip preservice teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively work with CLD students. She draws upon the concept of teachers as 'cultural brokers' (Gentemann & Whitehead, as cited in Gay, 1993) as a guiding construct in conceptualizing cultural competence in education.

> A cultural broker is one who thoroughly understands different cultural systems, is able to interpret cultural symbols from one frame of reference to another, can mediate cultural incompatibilities, and knows how to build bridges or establish linkages across cultures that facilitate the instructional process" (p. 292).

As cultural brokers, teachers are able to interpret cultural behaviors and then select appropriate pedagogical behaviors. The skills necessary to become a cultural broker include acquiring cultural knowledge, becoming a change agent, and then translating that cultural knowledge into appropriate pedagogical strategies.

The Impact of Attitudes and Beliefs on Readiness to Work With CLD Students

Our attitudes and beliefs have a tremendous impact on our perceptions and have an understandable influence on our actions. For this reason, there has been a great deal of research in the area of teacher beliefs. Teacher beliefs influence how teachers define their job, influence how they do their job, and how they respond to events in their classroom (Kennedy, as cited in Hinchey, 1994). The beliefs and attitudes of teachers may facilitate or hinder the application of multicultural knowledge and skills (Betsinger, Garcia, & Guerra, 2000); thus, beliefs and attitudes about diversity are important to address in teacher preparation programs.

To be effective when working with students from diverse backgrounds, teachers must have an understanding and appreciation of cultural pluralism. Harry, Torguson, Katkavich, & Guerrero (1993) found that direct interaction helped diminish negative stereotypes of CLD students and families. Teachers also need to be willing to work to transform the quality of schooling for students from historically disenfranchised groups (Gay, 1993).

Teacher's beliefs can also have an effect on the classrooms and schools in which they choose to teach. Many teachers report a preference for working in schools much like those that they attended, usually in suburban areas or in schools that are less likely to be culturally diverse (Larke, 1990). An indication that special education has not come to terms with the complex relationship of culture, class, and disability is the persistent problem of overrepresentation of minority students. Indeed, many teachers report feeling uncomfortable working with CLD students and their families (Larke, 1990) because they question their ability to teach students from diverse backgrounds who may be experiencing academic difficulty (Hayes & Price, 2000). New teachers need to reflect on their beliefs about working with students from cultural groups different from those they are familiar with and in schools different from the ones they may have attended; they should also question their assumptions about the types of schools they prefer to work in (Hinchey, 1994).

Statement of the Problem

In the past, schools have not adequately met the needs of CLD students. Two factors that support this assertion are poor achievement and drop out patterns of CLD students (Day-Vines, 2000). The inadequate preparation of educational personnel to work effectively with diverse populations has contributed to the failure of CLD students to be successful in school settings (Voltz, 1998). Despite the addition of multicultural elements to the standards of the above listed organizations, very little is known about how special education teacher education programs are preparing teachers to work with diverse students and how successful programs are at preparing special education teachers to work with CLD students and their families (Valles, 1998). Few studies have been published which examine the impact of multicultural coursework on beginning teachers' effectiveness with CLD exceptional students. "Although there are certain agreed upon elements for productive preparation of teachers for diverse settings, there is a great deal that is not yet known about both the elements of successful teaching across cultures and the process of preparing teachers for cultural diversity" (Edwards, McNamara, & Carter, 2000, p. 5-6). Strategies currently being evaluated in the effort to increase the intercultural competence of preservice teachers include promoting reflective practice (Dieker, & Monda-Amaya, 1997), case studies (Anderson & Baker, 1999; Edwards, McNamara, & Carter, 2000), portfolios (Fallon, & Watts, 2001;

Kenney, & LaMontagne, 1999; Pleasants, Johnson, & Trent, 1998) and concept maps (Artiles & McClafferty, 1998; Trent, Pernell, Mungai, & Chimedza, 1998). Generally, it can be said that teacher education programs have not been successful at preparing teachers to work with diverse students (Artiles et al., 2000; Webb-Johnson et al., 1998). Gay (1993) contends that the lack of 'fit' or synchronization between the cultural systems of schools and diverse groups has led to school failure for CLD students. Traditionally, schools have been the transmitter of the dominant culture to students from backgrounds different from the dominant group and it is the failure of CLD students to assimilate to the dominant culture that has resulted in their low academic achievement (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998). From this perspective, CLD students are unsuccessful in school not because they lack the drive or academic potential, but because they learn differently than the expectations and norms found in traditional schools (Gay, 1993).

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study was designed to investigate the experiences and perceptions of special education student teachers that were completing certification requirements in generic special education, and placed in classrooms with CLD students with mild to moderate disabilities. Through interviews, dialogue and observations, I explored the relationship between student teachers' understanding of culture and their perceptions about their readiness to work in

CLD environments, as reflected in their interactions with their CLD students with disabilities. Several researchers (McDiarmid, 1992; Obiakor & Utley, 1997; Trent & Artiles, 1995 as cited in Trent & Artiles, 1998) have discussed the need to examine preservice teachers' beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, skills and actions as they progress through their coursework, participate in field experiences, and begin their careers. It is necessary to study teachers' perceptions, beliefs and background experiences because they are reflected in their teaching practices (Cabello & Burstein, 1995). Webb-Johnson et al. (1998) also discuss the need for qualitative studies that can offer a more holistic understanding of multicultural teacher preparation programs. Betsinger et al. (2000) found that teacher beliefs and attitudes must be addressed before knowledge about cultural groups can be translated into culturally relevant instruction.

Through this exploratory research, I examined student teachers' perceptions of their preparation to work with CLD students during the concluding semester of their teacher preparation program. This is an area about which relatively little empirical research exists, particularly in special education, so it is appropriate to begin by building a foundation of information that begins with the first-hand accounts of student teachers who were encountering students from diverse backgrounds and held responsible for providing appropriate instruction.

Research Questions

In qualitative research, research questions are intended only as an initial guide in the exploration of phenomena (Patton, 1990). The overall function of guiding questions is to explore individual differences in experiences (Campbell & Boruch, 1975). The central question guiding the study was: What are special education preservice student teachers' perceptions of their readiness to serve culturally and linguistically diverse exceptional students? The following subquestions provided a specific focus for data collection:

1. How do special education preservice student teachers define culture and what is their understanding of its influence on the teaching-learning process?
2. What are special education preservice student teachers' perceptions of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs necessary to successfully serve culturally and linguistically diverse exceptional students?
3. How does the student teaching experience affect the student teachers' perceptions about their readiness, including the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs, to successfully serve culturally and linguistically diverse exceptional students?

I used naturalistic inquiry as the guiding methodology for this study. "The process of inquiry for the naturalistic researcher becomes one of developing and

verifying shared constructions that will enable the meaningful expansion of knowledge" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 21). The naturalistic researcher seeks to establish relationships through which constructions are mutually shaped in a collaborative effort with the researcher and informant participating voluntarily. It is not an exercise in determining if the informants are forming the "right" constructions.

This naturalistic inquiry incorporated emergent interviewing and debriefing sessions following observations as the primary means of data collection. Documents were reviewed including copies of written feedback from the cooperating teacher and university supervisor for each student teacher, copies of the required self-evaluations completed by the student teacher at mid-term and the end of their placement, as well as copies of the required mid-term and final evaluations of the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor. In the use of naturalistic inquiry, I was not attempting to develop generalizations. Rather, through the development of my participants' shared understandings about their multicultural special education preparation, I attempted to learn about the experiences they felt had prepared them to work with CLD students with disabilities. Although this study does not provide definitive answers or guidelines, it can contribute to the development of working hypotheses about teachers as learners in the context of this teacher preparation program and serve to ultimately

refine and validate program content. It is expected that findings from this study can be used to inform similar teacher preparation programs in how to better prepare student teachers to work effectively with students from CLD backgrounds and to generate new questions for future inquiries.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research literature in the area of teacher preparation discusses the need for our current training programs to address the growing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students found in our schools. The reality that the teaching force continues to be primarily White, middle-class, and female while the student population has grown increasingly diverse is an issue discussed by numerous teacher educators. The proportion of CLD students is predicted to reach 40% of the student population by the year 2020 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1996) while approximately 90% of the current teaching force is comprised of White teachers (McIntyre, 1997). Given the current enrollments in teacher preparation programs, the cultural mismatch between teachers and their students is expected to continue (Ladson-Billings, 1995a).

The low achievement of CLD students has been a continuing challenge for educators. Teacher education is largely overlooked as a factor in the situation (Zeichner, 1993). CLD students struggle in school not because they lack motivation or academic potential, but rather because "how they go about learning is incompatible with school expectations and norms" (Gay, 1993, p. 289). To better understand the "schooling vulnerability" of CLD students, a comprehensive view of the schooling process must include an understanding of the relationship

between home and school, the psycho-socio-cultural incongruities between the two and the resulting effects on learning and achievement (Garcia, 1996). Low achievement may, in fact, reflect the inadequacy of the learning environment for CLD students (Garcia & Dominguez, 1997). With the increasing population of culturally diverse students, particularly in urban areas, and given our failure to provide successful school experiences for those students, there is a critical need for teacher education programs to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students (Burstein & Cabello, 1989). Even though not all teachers will initially choose to work with diverse student groups, all teachers need to be trained in diverse settings to prepare preservice teachers to work with a greater degree of diversity (Valles, 1998). "Failure to effectively prepare teachers inevitably leads to the school's failure to effectively prepare children" (Bynoe, 1998, p. 38).

Defining Culture in Education

Culture Defined

The term culture has an assortment of definitions. It often refers to information about values, ideals, concepts, and expected behaviors. The norms and rules of a culture specify what behavior is acceptable and unacceptable when we interact with others.

> All of us came into this world knowing literally nothing of what we need to know to function acceptably in human society. Through the process of enculturation, cultural patterns are etched into our nervous system and become part of our personality and behavior. This internalized learning enables us to interact easily with other members of our culture, who share a similar image of reality. That is, the culture of our youth provides a common pattern for our cognitive, affective, and behavioral structure and processes so that people belonging to the same culture tend to have a similar understanding of and responses to reality. It is culture that programs us to define what is real, what is true, what is right, what is beautiful, and what is good (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997, p. 356).

Cultural values represent the shared norms, expectations, and beliefs that distinguish one group from another; it is the thread that holds a specific ethnic group and social class together (Townsend, Thomas, Witty, & Lee, 1996). Although these beliefs represent group tendencies for a cultural group, individual and subcultural differences do exist based on personality, class, gender, religion, and so forth (Garcia & Dominguez, 1997). In school settings, culture influences the shared beliefs and expectations of cultural groups for the curricular content to be taught, the manner in which instruction is provided, and who should provide it (Garcia & Dominguez, 1997).

Hofstede's Dimensions of Cultural Variability

According to Hofstede (1991), there are four dimensions in which cultures can vary: Individualism-Collectivism, Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance, and Masculinity-Femininity. The first dimension, Individualism-Collectivism, can be summarized as the "I" vs. "We" orientation. In an individualistic culture, the individual is primarily concerned with his/her personal well-being. Independence and self-actualization characterize this orientation. The primary concern in a collectivistic culture would be the well-being of the family or group. Interdependence, relationships, and group harmony are characteristic of the collectivist orientation.

The second dimension is Uncertainty Avoidance, and refers to the degree to which members of a culture try to avoid uncertainty or ambiguity. A person from a culture that is characterized by high uncertainty avoidance would be comfortable with only a small amount of uncertainty when communicating with others and tend to have a direct communication style. A low uncertainty avoidance culture would be less concerned with ambiguity in communication and would be more comfortable relying on context clues when communicating.

The third dimension is Power Distance, and refers to the distribution of power. A culture that is considered high power distance would see power as a basic fact of life and would not consider questioning authority. A low power

culture feels that power should only be used when it is gained legitimately. There are often laws or cultural norms that seek to minimize the power differentials among groups.

The fourth dimension is Masculinity-Femininity. In a highly masculine culture, differentiated sex roles are emphasized. The role gender plays would be significantly less important in a highly feminine culture. Each dimension discussed represents a continuum; no culture exists on either extreme. Rather, each culture places added importance on one value in comparison to the other (Hofstede, 1991).

The Impact of Culture on the Teaching and Learning Process

Influences on Teacher and Student Behavior

Culture colors and shapes our image of reality and guides the way we think (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Our culture has a direct influence on our behavior through the norms and rules we use to guide our behavior when interacting with others. For example, as we acquire language, we are acquiring culture, which in turn, conditions our perceptions, thinking, and behavior (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Teachers and students both work from their own culturally bound frame of reference (Patton, 1998). **"**Teaching is a necessarily personalized transaction between the teacher and the learner because the teacher brings his or her 'own self' (perceptions, habits, and experiences) into the

classroom" (Elmore & McLaughlin, as cited in Bynoe, 1998, p. 38). This "own self" is a variable that is always present and influences the inter- and intrapersonal nature of the teaching-learning process (Bynoe, 1998).

Traditional preparation programs include little knowledge on the impact of cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic variables on student learning (Obiakor & Utley, 1997). A significant difficulty in discussions about culture is that most people have not had the opportunity to consider the influence of their own cultural background on their behavior. "It is critical that we take care to better prepare teachers to learn about their own cultural identity and to consider their students' cultural identity as encompassing more than ethnicity" (Brislin, 1993, p. 69). Generally, the greater the cultural and linguistic knowledge, and the more our beliefs overlap with those from different cultural backgrounds with whom we are trying to communicate, the less likelihood there will be misunderstandings (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003).

Cockrell, Placier, Cockrell, & Middleton (1999) found that many preservice teachers operate from a limited knowledge about culture and identity. Teachers must understand that CLD children bring to school modes of interaction and behavior that reflect the "invisible" or hidden culture of their home and that are often in conflict with the invisible culture of the school (Greenfield, Raeff, & Quiroz, 1995). As preservice teachers begin their field placements, they are asked

to develop rules, routines, and instructional arrangements that encourage CLD students to work cooperatively toward a common goal in the classroom. As this occurs, preservice teachers may begin to recognize the impact of culture on their own beliefs about teaching and learning and be able to acknowledge how these beliefs are challenged by students from CLD backgrounds (Greenfield et al., 1995; Burstein & Sears, 1998).

Hollins' Typology of Culture in Teaching Practices

Both teachers and students come to school with their own cultural frame of reference. Hollins (1996) provides a framework for understanding how teachers address questions about whose cultural values should guide their practice. According to Hollins, there are three ways to view culture: as artifact and behavior, as social and political relationships, or as affect, behavior and intellect. The view adopted shapes how the individual will define culture, its relationship to political beliefs, how school learning is conceptualized, and curricular and instructional approaches (Hollins, 1996). It is only through viewing culture as affect, behavior, and intellect that one will be able to understand the "deep" meaning of culture.

If culture is viewed as artifact and behavior, culture is limited to observable phenomena such as ceremonies, dress, cultural artifacts, and culinary practices. Maintaining the status quo would characterize their political beliefs.

Learning would be conceptualized as being universal; all kids learn the same and should be treated the same. When a teacher views culture as artifact and behavior, student difficulties are seen through the medical model or tend to be explained by problems in the learner. Approaches to instruction would give no or little attention to social and cultural needs and the cultural knowledge learners bring to school. Basic skills would be remediated with close attention given to sequenced objectives. The curriculum would advocate a contributionist perspective, where the contributions of ethnic minorities are included as an appendage to the mainstream curriculum. Curriculum should not be designed to stir ethnocentric pride.

If culture is viewed as social and political relationships, culture has a broader, more abstract definition and will include political referents. Teachers would subscribe to a multiculturalist perspective, advocate social reconstruction, and promote egalitarianism and pluralism. In this view, all students are not seen as learning the same way. Different approaches for different students may be tried. Instruction is designed to be responsive to cultural diversity and failure occurs because the environment is inflexible. Failure is attributed to the student's lack of experience and skill to adapt to the instructional process. If a teacher has the social and political view, they are likely to oppose reproducing society as it presently exists and do not want their classrooms to reflect society's injustices.

They would argue that schools should be directly involved in social change to prepare students to be economically productive and be prepared to live harmoniously in a diverse society.

The view of culture that allows a conceptualization of the deeper meaning of culture is culture as affect, behavior and intellect. In this view of culture, teachers are empowered with the knowledge, skills, and cultural values for self-determination, and active and responsible social participation. They would hold a reconstructionist-egalitarian perspective and be an advocate for social justice. They would agree that school practices should build on and extend what the child learns at home and would strive to make linkages between the home-culture and school learning for CLD students. Students would learn from and with each other; collaboration between students would be facilitated and encouraged. Teachers in this group would believe that meaningful school learning is directly linked to that already in progress in ways that extend and build on the cultural knowledge and the knowledge about culture the student has already acquired. Cultural knowledge includes understandings, values, and behaviors acquired in the socialization or enculturation process within the home culture. Knowledge about culture includes the history, beliefs, customs, traditions, and accomplishments of a particular group and how others have benefited from the groups' experiences. As preservice teachers are able to form a working definition of culture, they will then be able to

form a theory to guide their instruction for a culturally diverse population (Hollins, 1996).

Cultural Conflicts

Cultural incongruencies are the chief source of dissension in the classroom. Some of the most critical cultural conflicts in the classroom are in the areas of cultural values, patterns of communication and cognitive processing, task performance or work habits, self-presentation style, and approaches to problem-solving (Gay, 1993). Many CLD students are not successful in school because their cultural, social, and/or linguistic characteristics are not recognized, devalued, or misunderstood (Kea & Utley, 1998). The misunderstanding or disagreement that results when two or more individuals from different backgrounds interact, each basing their behaviors on a different set of rules for what is expected and/or considered appropriate is described as a "well-meaning cultural clash" (Brislin, 1993). The fact that these conflicts occur "without deliberate and conscious intent" by the teacher does not lessen the impact on CLD students. "If anything, this increases their significance as obstacles to successful teaching and learning in culturally pluralistic classrooms and as variables to be targeted for inclusion in multicultural teacher preparation programs" (Gay, 1993, p. 289).

Intercultural Communication

Culture is discernable most often during the communication process (Townsend et al., 1996). Communication between two people from different cultures is referred to as intercultural communication. This involves a transactional, symbolic process involving the attribution of meaning between people from different cultures (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). In intercultural communication, culture influences socialization, which shapes our individual characteristics, which in turn, affects our communication behavior (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). The cross-cultural variations in verbal styles of communication and languages influence how people from different cultures communicate. Culture affects what messages are perceived and how they are interpreted, and the response, whether it is a verbal or nonverbal response (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003).

A variety of conditions can lead to ineffective communication when communicating with those from different cultural backgrounds. The message may not be transmitted in a way that can be understood by others or they may misinterpret what is said, or both situations could occur at the same time. Problems could also be the result of pronunciation, grammar, familiarity with the topic being discussed, familiarity with the other person, familiarity with the other person's native language, fluency in the other person's native language, and/or social factors (Gass & Varonis, as cited in Gudykunst & Kim, 1997). The

teaching and learning process is a reciprocal process where teachers and students work together to construct meaning from their interactions (Zeichner, 1993). For these interactions to be successful, both the teachers and students must have effective intercultural communication skills and be able to bridge their cultural differences.

Gudykunst's Theory of Intercultural Communication. After a review of the literature from the fields of communication, social psychology, sociology, and anthropology, Gudykunst (1993, 1994) developed a theory of intercultural communication that has direct applications to the communication found in classrooms. Communication is the process of making meaning out of our interpretations of others' communication. Gudykunst's theory, principally an anxiety/uncertainty model, requires people to reduce misunderstandings when communicating. In order to accomplish this task, Gudykunst contends that people must have the motivation or desire to communicate with "cultural strangers," knowledge of the communication process, and skills to communicate effectively. Proficient communicators are motivated to communicate with cultural strangers, have sufficient knowledge to be able to predict others' behavior accurately, and the skills to be mindful, tolerate ambiguity, and manage anxiety.

Multicultural Education Literature on Teacher Education

Research done on teacher preparation is finding that teacher preparation programs are not equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to work effectively with CLD students (Burstein & Cabello, 1989; Zeichner, 1993). In 1977, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education revised its standards and recommended that multicultural education be incorporated into all phases of teacher education. The journal, *Teacher Education & Special Education* called for the inclusion of multiculturalism as a strand within special education teacher training programs in 1979 (Trent & Artiles, 1998). Reforms made in multicultural education have largely consisted of the infusion of a single multicultural class (Artiles & Trent, 1997; Webb-Johnson et al, 1998). Cochran-Smith found that much of the content in multicultural courses has focused on the customs and traditions of non-majority children and has only served to perpetuate the stereotypes and overgeneralizations that educators intended to dispel (as cited in Trent & Artiles, 1998). In fact, Artiles & Trent (1997) talk about the danger in discussing cultural variables without acknowledging or addressing the interaction of several of these sociocultural variables in people's lives.

"Debates about multicultural education are embedded in the larger issues of how nation-states manage ethnic diversity and whether sociocultural pluralism is a practical or desirable reality" (Greenman & Kimmel, 1995, p. 360). The

worldview of the dominant culture is generally reflected in multicultural education policy and programs (Greenman & Kimmel, 1995). "Many who are driving forces in multicultural programs still equate cultural difference with at-risk students and a culture of poverty rather than acknowledging the complexity of the concepts of culture and ethnicity and the need for continual reflection, reassessment, and redefinition" (Greenman & Kimmel, 1995, p. 361).

According to Trent and Artiles (1998), only deliberate efforts to raise preservice teachers' awareness of the issues affecting minorities will enable them to gain an understanding of CLD students' backgrounds and allow them to design instruction that will meet their needs. Resistance to the issues of culture, race, class, and gender in classrooms has been documented (Artiles & Trent, 1997; Greenman & Kimmel, 1995). "It is important that future studies examine several areas, including the influence of teacher education program contexts on teacher's learning to teach processes, teacher knowledge issues, and the connection between teacher knowledge and classroom practices" (Webb-Johnson et al., 1998, p. 13). Currently, the impact cultural diversity is having on the implementation of effective teaching strategies and methods has not yet been determined (Valles, 1998).

The level to which multicultural content has been incorporated into teacher preparation programs varies widely. Banks (1989) identified four levels of

integration of ethnic content into school curriculum. The contributions approach focuses on heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural elements. In the additive approach, content, concepts, themes and perspectives are added to the curriculum without changing its structure. In the transformation approach, the structure of the curriculum is changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspective of CLD students. Teachers make decisions on important social issues and take time to help solve the problem in the social action approach. Valle (1998) contends that for programs to prepare teachers to work with CLD students with a wider range of abilities, the areas of diversity, culturally relevant methods and strategies, knowledge about second language acquisition, classroom management and assessment should be addressed in the curriculum of teacher education programs.

The Organizing for Diversity Project

Program recommendations found throughout the literature available in the area of multicultural teacher preparation provided the theoretical foundation for the Organizing for Diversity Project (ODP). The primary purpose of the ODP was to develop professional development modules designed to prepare teachers to work more effectively with diverse students (Betsinger, Garcia, & Guerra, 2000). The content of the staff development modules focused on factors that influence instruction as well as the interpersonal relationships between teachers, students

and their families. The content of the individual modules focused on: the importance of effective intercultural communication in the classroom, views of culture, cultural influences and the socialization of children, dimensions of cultural variability, strategies for acquiring culture-specific knowledge, and interviewing as a strategy to acquire culture-specific knowledge.

The primary aim of the program was to enhance teachers' self-awareness of diversity issues (including their personal beliefs about diverse students), their knowledge and understanding of cultural influences on teaching and learning, and their communication skills for instructing and relating to diverse students. The major goals of the study were: (a) to provide teachers with opportunities to explore their own cultural identity and understand how this affects their teaching and interactions with diverse students; (b) to increase teachers' understanding of how student identities are shaped by their own socio-cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, and how this affects learning and interactions in the classroom; and (c) to develop teachers' ability to foster bicultural/multicultural competence for all students. These objectives are found throughout the literature on multicultural teacher preparation discussing the essential knowledge and skills for working with CLD students with and without disabilities.

A theoretical framework based on the work of Brislin & Yoshida (1994) and Gudykunst & Kim (1997) was developed that informed the ODP design.

Their work focused on building a theory of interpersonal and intergroup effectiveness that can be relevant to improving the quality of communication between individuals from different socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds in classrooms. The framework reflects the assumptions that (a) intercultural communication plays an important role in interactions between teachers and students of different cultures, (b) increasing teachers' understanding of intercultural communication will contribute to more culturally responsive interactions with students, and that (c) culturally responsive communication with CLD students will enhance instruction for this population. In the ODP study, the model was used to look at ways that teachers might be able to improve the communication and reduce the cultural incongruities they experience between themselves and their CLD students.

Overall, the results indicated the relationship among teachers' awareness, knowledge, beliefs, and skills is multifaceted. Results confirm that teachers were able to increase their awareness of their own cultural identity and were able to recognize cultural influences in the classroom. The general and specific cultural knowledge teachers had about the impact of culture also increased, as did their ability to prevent or manage cultural clashes in the classroom. The most interesting finding, however, was that one's belief system must be examined

before cultural knowledge can be translated into culturally relevant instruction (Betsinger et al., 2000).

Program Recommendations for Working with CLD Students in General Education

According to Bynoe (1998), to hope to meet the needs of CLD students, teacher preparation programs must accomplish three important tasks. The first responsibility is to reduce the mismatch between teacher and student populations through innovative ways to recruit, retain, and graduate in a timely fashion, certified teachers from CLD backgrounds. Secondly, protocols that promote self-reflection should be established that measure the quality and quantity of intent and effort necessary to be effective or to align teacher thinking and practices with the conditions and needs of students. Finally, student teachers should be prepared to accommodate CLD students by immersing preservice teachers in schools in which they intend to teach and by providing a range of experiences that facilitate a realistic understanding of real school conditions. Of concern is the finding of Holm and Nations-Johnson (1994) that preservice teachers ignore the information presented to them in their coursework once they enter their field settings.

A study of undergraduate preservice teachers conducted by Larke (1990), provided data suggesting preservice teachers were not “comfortable” working with students from backgrounds different from their own or with personal contact

with the parents of such children. This discomfort undoubtedly affects their effectiveness with CLD students. It is, therefore, critical to include specific knowledge and skills in the areas of language and culture into training programs. Teachers should be able to address the multiplicity of experiences that children bring to school with a variety of instructional strategies.

Villegas (1991) developed a framework for assessing the cultural competence of teachers that requires teachers to have: (a) an attitude of respect for cultural differences, knowledge of the cultural resources in the teaching-learning process, and skills in tapping these resources in the teaching-learning process; (b) a belief that all students are capable of learning evidenced in an enriched curriculum for all pupils; and (c) a strong sense of professional efficacy when evaluating students.

Gay's Teacher Preparation Model

According to Gay (1993), there are five issues that should be addressed by programs preparing teachers to work effectively with CLD students. Cultural discontinuity is the first issue to be addressed given that these discontinuities are a primary cause of school failure for CLD students. The stress and anxiety that results from students and teachers trying to reconcile two or more cultural systems is a second issue. "These conditions do not create 'safe and supportive' environments for learning, one of the commonly accepted requirements for

effective schooling" (p. 290). A third issue is the learned helplessness that develops as students' ideas and ways of doing things are not valued in the classroom. Consequently, students begin to see themselves as incompetent, and feel insecure, resulting in learned helplessness. An additional issue that should be addressed by preparation programs is that of situational competence, where there is the assumption that the teacher understands that all students are capable at some skills under certain conditions. Cultural context teaching is the final issue that preparation programs need to address. Cultural context teaching is "synchronizing various cultural styles of teaching and learning and creating culturally compatible classrooms that provide genuine invitations and opportunities for all students to engage maximally in academic pursuits without any one group being unduly advantaged or penalized" (Barbe & Swassing; Shade, as cited in Gay 1993, p. 292).

These issues were addressed in Gay's "Bold Proposal" for a teacher education program in which teachers should be taught to be 'cultural brokers' (Gentemann & Whitehead, as cited in Gay, 1993). Gay (1993) describes a cultural broker as a teacher who can fully understand different cultural systems, can interpret cultural symbols from different frames of reference, can mediate cultural incompatibilities, and knows how to build bridges or establish linkages across cultures that facilitate the instructional process. The skills necessary for teachers

to become cultural brokers are: acquiring cultural knowledge, becoming change agents, and translating that cultural knowledge into appropriate pedagogical strategies.

Acquiring Cultural Knowledge. Acquiring cultural knowledge involves learning factual information about characteristics of different ethnic and cultural groups and understanding the classroom implications. Studying the accumulated scholarly research on different ethnic and cultural groups and in-depth, first-hand experiences gained from participatory observations in various cultural communities allow students to gain needed cultural knowledge. The dimensions of culture most relevant to the prevention of classroom conflicts include "cultural values, relational patterns, learning styles and work habits, communication styles, rewards and punishments, social etiquette and decorum, cultural ethos, self-presentation styles, and patterns of ethnic identification and affiliation" (p. 294). The cultural content courses should be complimented with seminars that extend the pedagogical principles and practices beyond what is covered in the cultural content coursework, contain a field-based practicum in a diverse school setting, and provide the opportunity for students to develop a philosophy for cultural context teaching. This element should address the development of "an understanding and appreciation of cultural pluralism in the classroom as a vital, creative, and enriching phenomenon, as well as its potential for transforming the

quality of schooling for students from historically disenfranchised groups" (p. 294-295).

Becoming Change Agents. According to Gay (1993), to become a cultural broker and cultural context teacher, preservice teachers must learn how to initiate change. "This role requires a commitment to institutional transformation and developing skills for incorporating cultural diversity into the normative operations of schools and classrooms" (Gay, 1993, p. 295). Four steps are necessary to become a change agent. The first step involves teaching students critical analysis skills and self-reflection to enable students to analyze the structures and procedures in the school climate, to examine their own ways of behaving in instructional settings, and to identify cultural conflicts between school culture and that of students to better meet the needs of CLD students. The second step is to teach students to deconstruct mainstream hegemonic assumptions, values, and beliefs found in a normal classroom setting by understanding how culture influences classroom practices. This step entails identifying possible cultural conflicts and learning how to identify "those structural components that are most significant to incorporating cultural pluralism into routine classroom procedures" (Gay, 1993, p. 295). The third step involves having students realize that simply having the desire to change is not sufficient to bring about such change. "Students must understand the organizational culture, climate, and psychology of schools;

why schools are self-perpetuating institutions; obstacles to change; cooperative strategies for planned change; and techniques to initiate and sustain change" (Gay, 1993, p. 295-296). The last step in becoming a change agent requires students to develop cross-cultural communication and multicultural counseling skills. Principles of second language acquisition and bilingual education may also be appropriate knowledge to have in certain cases as well.

Translating Cultural Knowledge into Pedagogical Strategies. Teacher preparation programs need to be designed so that teacher education students have ample opportunities in actual classroom settings to engage in supervised practice to learn how to be effective in cultural context teaching and become a competent cultural broker. In order to accomplish these goals, students need to learn how to identify various teaching and learning styles, match teaching styles with various learning styles, create appropriate classroom environments, integrate diverse cultural content into subject matter curricula, and select appropriate assessment instruments. These skills need to be taught along with a change in beliefs about "what knowledge is of greatest worth for citizenship in a pluralistic world and what are the best ways it can be acquired for students from different ethnic, cultural, racial, and social backgrounds" (Gay, 1993, p. 296). A supervised cultural brokerage internship that takes place in a diverse classroom setting where students have the opportunity to refine the developing skills of becoming a

cultural broker should also be part of teacher preparation programs. This experience should be in addition to the traditional student teaching requirement and should be of long enough duration to allow students to understand the challenges involved in the institutional culture of schools. "The challenge is for teachers to determine what individual strengths and cultural competencies different students bring to the classroom and to design learning experiences to capitalize on them (Gay, 1993, p. 291).

Additional Strategies for Working with CLD Students

Numerous authors have discussed strategies for working with diverse student populations. After an extensive review of the literature describing teaching approaches that have been effective for CLD students, Zeichner (as cited in Garcia, 1996) described the following key elements:

- Teachers have a clear sense of their own ethnic and cultural identities.
- High expectations for the success of all students and a belief that all students can succeed are communicated to students.
- Teachers are personally committed to achieving equity for all students and believe that they are capable of making a difference in their students' learning.
- Teachers have developed a bond with their students and cease seeing their students as "the other."

- Students are provided with an academically challenging curriculum that includes attention to the development of higher-level cognitive skills.
- Instruction focuses on students' creation of meaning about content in an interactive and collaborative learning environment.
- Students see learning tasks as meaningful.
- The curriculum includes the contributions and perceptions of the different ethnocultural groups that compose the society.
- Teachers provide "scaffolding" that links the academically challenging curriculum to the cultural resources that students bring to school.
- Teachers explicitly teach students the culture of the school and seek to maintain students' sense of ethnocultural pride and identity.
- Community members and parents or guardians are encouraged to become involved in students' education and are given a significant voice in making important school decisions related to programs (i.e., about resources and staffing).
- Teachers are involved in political struggles outside the classroom that are aimed at achieving a more just and humane society (p. 808).

Presently, the impact cultural diversity is having on the implementation of effective teaching strategies and methods is not yet known (Valles, 1998). The

manner in which general teacher education programs are integrating culturally relevant strategies continues to be investigated.

Program Recommendations for Working with CLD Students with Disabilities

"If teachers are going to work in classrooms with more diverse groups of students, now and in the future, it would seem apparent that culturally and linguistically appropriate methods and materials should be the emphasis of preservice training" (Valles, 1998, p. 53). The growing research base in multicultural education and continuing work in bilingual education can be useful in developing effective programs for exceptional students from CLD backgrounds. The Council for Exceptional Children also provides recommendations for knowledge and skills necessary for special education teachers just entering the field. Those recommendations are discussed followed by descriptions of the program components recommended by various teacher educators.

CEC Common Core of Knowledge and Skills

"Professional standards that define expectations of the knowledge and skills of individuals who are certified as special educators have had a significant impact on teacher education curriculum in special education" (Otis-Wilborn & Winn, 2000, p. 78). The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has continued to

update their recommendations for the CEC Common Core of Knowledge and Skills essential for all beginning special education teachers. In the latest edition, eleven items were added to the Common Core to more fully address multicultural knowledge and skills. The professional standards reflect the idea that special educators must be familiar with the characteristics of their learners, including factors such as culture, language, gender, religion, and sexuality in order to be able to design effective interventions (The Council for Exceptional Children, 2000).

The knowledge and skill statements in the eight common core areas are written to be inclusive in nature. That is, they address all learners, including those from diverse cultural backgrounds. The eight common core areas are:

1. Philosophical, Historical, and Legal Foundations of Special Education
2. Characteristics of Learners
3. Assessment, Diagnosis, and Evaluation
4. Instructional Content and Practice
5. Planning and Managing the Teaching and Learning Environment
6. Managing Student Behavior and Social Interaction Skills
7. Communication and Collaborative Partnerships
8. Professionalism and Ethical Practices.

Critical aspects of diversity are addressed more specifically in each of the core areas (See Table in Appendix A). For example, in the core area of Professionalism and Ethical Practices, a new teacher should be aware of personal cultural biases and differences that affect one's teaching. In the same core area, a new teacher should also be able to demonstrate a positive regard for the culture, religion, gender, and sexual orientation of individual students. According to the Council for Exceptional Children, to be qualified to enter into practice, new special education teachers should have the knowledge and skills described in the eight core areas. Because of the lack of data on the effectiveness of multicultural special education programs, more information is needed on how teacher preparation programs are integrating the eight core areas into their preparation programs and what the results have been.

Special Education Preparation Program Descriptions

Numerous authors describe key components of special education preparation programs designed to work effectively with CLD students. Cloud (1993) contends that in order for the needs of CLD students to be met, teachers must address their major characteristics, culture, language, and disability. Cloud recognized that although cultural biases in assessment and identification procedures are topics frequently discussed by special educators, the same issues are largely ignored in providing instruction. The task of teacher preparation

programs is to develop attitudes, knowledge bases, and skill repertoires (Rodriguez, as cited in Cloud, 1993).

> First, special educators must examine and challenge the attitudes, values, and beliefs that drive their current practices with this population….
>
> Second, special educators must acquire all relevant knowledge bases. Vital areas of knowledge would include bilingualism and cognitive development, the acculturation process, first and second language acquisition, and primary and second language literacy development….Finally, teachers need to learn appropriate techniques and strategies for establishing effective teaching and learning environments, for teaching language and academic content, for evaluating student growth, and for interacting with CLD parents (Cloud, 1993, p. 68-69)

To provide an appropriate and equitable education for CLD students with disabilities, Cloud reiterated that all three characteristics, culture, language, and disability must be addressed in an integrated fashion.

Garcia and Malkin (1993) describe four specific areas special education teachers must have knowledge and skills in to appropriately serve CLD students with disabilities. CLD students "are at higher risk of being misidentified and as having disabilities, and their educational experiences may not take into account the reality that linguistic and cultural characteristics co-exist and interact with

disability-related factors" (p. 52). The first area is addressing language characteristics. Essential language information, such as language dominance and proficiency levels, must be gathered. Current language information is critical to the development of an appropriate language use plan.

The second area special education teachers should have knowledge and skills in is the influence of culture. For example, it is vital to have information on the childrearing practices of the child's family and the influence of culture on the child's communication style. Selection of appropriate instructional strategies is the third area that needs to be addressed. The creation of supportive learning environments is the final area to be addressed. Developing cultural competence is crucial to lessen the amount of anxiety felt when interacting with a 'cultural stranger.'

Burstein, Cabello, and Hamann (1993) describe a special education teacher preparation program that infused multicultural competencies throughout an existing program. Program goals included: examining beliefs about the influence of culture; developing knowledge about culturally diverse students; and developing skills to adapt instruction to diverse student needs. Competency areas consisted of: (a) social and cultural influences; (b) language acquisition and development; (c) assessment of CLD students with disabilities; (d) instructional methods and evaluation for CLD students with disabilities; (e) curriculum

utilization and adaptation for CLD students with disabilities; (f) classroom management for CLD students with disabilities; and (g) school and community relations (Burstein, Cabello, and Hamann, 1993, p. 3). The authors found that the preservice teachers perceived themselves as more competent after coursework with the multicultural competencies.

Burstein and Sears (1998) conducted a study that examined the effectiveness of an on-the-job teacher education program designed to prepare and retain teachers to work in urban schools with students with disabilities. The objectives of the program were to develop teacher competencies specific to serving urban students with special needs; to link coursework and classroom practices through an experiential and reflective approach to teacher preparation; and to provide on-going support and guidance to teachers learning to teach while on-the-job. The three components of the program were coursework, seminars, and supervised practica. The coursework consisted of generic courses in language and cognition, positive behavioral supports, and assessment. Because at least one course was taken at the same time as the practica experiences, it was possible to coordinate the practica experiences with course requirements, a common criticism of many teacher preparation programs.

Teachers must learn to work towards change with families and community agencies because educators alone cannot solve the problems of students in urban

schools. The authors also developed a set of urban school competencies that were presented in the seminars. The competencies were designed to complement the traditional course content and were addressed in four program seminars titled "Developing a Learning Community," "Assessing At-Rick and Protective Factors," "Developing Personal Social Competency," and "Teachers as Advocates" (Burstein & Sears, 1998, p. 51).

Employers of program graduates rated the new teachers as highly competent and validated the importance of each individual competency listed in the set of urban school competencies. Program graduates were satisfied with their preparation; however, program graduates continued to experience stress and challenges in their jobs. After a year, 94% of program graduates were still teaching special education in an urban school. Given the continued shortage of special education teachers, it is imperative to adequately prepare preservice teachers so that they will remain in the teaching field.

According to Valles (1998), strategies for school personnel to gain cultural knowledge, culturally relevant methods and strategies, culturally appropriate assessment and behavior management practices, knowledge about second language acquisition, and strategies for working with CLD parents and families need to be added to program curriculum so that teachers will be prepared to work with a wider range of student characteristics and abilities. Preservice teachers

should be trained in diverse settings (Bay & Lopez-Reyna, 1997; Valles, 1998). Valles also suggests that this information be provided in in-service for practicing teachers and administrators for whom this knowledge base was not available during their preservice training.

Bay and Lopez-Reyna (1997) describe their program that is designed to prepare teachers to work with English language learners (ELL) with disabilities. The program was a two-year program that allowed teachers working in elementary, secondary or special education settings to obtain a master's degree in education with an area of specialization in bilingual special education. Program participants also included individuals who held a degree in a field other than education but were interested in pursuing a career in bilingual special education. Throughout the program and at the conclusion of the programs' first cohort, feedback about the program was solicited from program participants. Based on this feedback, the features of a bilingual special education teacher preparation program that were noted as necessary for working with ELL students with disabilities included:

> (a) guiding teacher candidates to design pedagogy that is not only based on best practices for children with special needs, but also influenced by the values and culture of the community; (b) encouraging teacher candidates to examine their beliefs about teaching; (c) broadening our

perspectives about collaboration to include community resources; and (d) offering social and professional support during program and immediately following it when graduates enter the field of bilingual special education (p. 9).

Kea and Utley (1998) propose three key components of special education teacher preparation programs to increase the cultural competence of teachers. The first component of their proposed training program includes efforts to recruit and train teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The second component requires multicultural education perspectives be included in special education courses. The final component dictates that programs provide instruction in implementing culturally responsive instruction in classroom settings.

Harry, Torguson, Katkavich, & Guerrero (1993) contend that no amount of theory can have the same effect as direct interaction with those from different cultural backgrounds. Teachers must bring teaching skills to the classroom acquired through teacher preparation to produce learner outcomes. Bynoe (1998) uses the analogy of a plumber called to your home to fix a leak would be viewed with suspicion or not let in if he or she came without a toolbox or could not summon the right tool or strategy to fix the leak. In refining their program over the course of several years, they have found that many preservice teachers have negative stereotypes of CLD students and families, and that these beliefs were

challenged and changed after participating in assignments that required direct interaction with the families of CLD students (Harry, et al., 1993).

Attitudes, Beliefs, and Perceptions

An important issue in teacher preparation is that "…most of today's preservice teachers unavoidably have a white, middle-class perspective and cannot imagine teaching in a multicultural, urban school" (Hinchey, 1994, p. 28). Personal histories and experiences guide beliefs about teaching (Holt-Reynolds, as cited in Bynoe, 1998). Otis-Wilborn and Winn (2000) found that successful teaching of CLD students goes beyond knowledge and skills; an unshakable belief in kids and high expectations with no excuses are also necessary. "Perhaps one of the more vexing issues for special educators in special education is making an impact on the beliefs and attitudes of teacher candidates about schools, teaching, learning, children, and disability" (Renzaglia, Hutchins, & Lee, 1997, p. 360). Beliefs are typically deeply embedded and difficult, if at all possible, to alter.

Attitudes and stereotypes influence our communication with people from cultural groups different from our own by creating expectations of how people will behave (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). "Attitudes predispose us to behave in a positive or negative manner toward various objects or people" (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997, p. 119). Ethnocentrism is seeing other's behavior from our own cultural perspective. Being highly ethnocentric results in our interpreting the

behavior of those from a cultural group different than our own from our own cultural frame of reference. We then, expect people from different cultural backgrounds, to behave the way we would behave under the same circumstances. It is difficult to understand other's behavior if we use our own cultural or ethnic frame of reference to interpret their behavior (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003).

Crosby, Bromley and Saxe (1980) contend that European Americans in the United States generally try to express non-bigoted ideologies and behave in a non-discriminatory fashion, but at the same time, have not internalized the feelings that correspond to the attitudes expressed (as cited in Gudykunst & Kim, 1997). Dean, Salend, and Taylor (1993) contend that teachers need to be culturally self-aware, be willing to contemplate teacher/student power structures in the classroom and reflect on how they respond to their students in relation to these power structures.

Perceptions influence how teachers teach (Rong, 1996). Perceptions involve our awareness of what is taking place in the environment. "Each person's perceptions are unique; they are based on culture, ethnicity, sex, background experiences, and needs" (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997, p. 168). Attributions are the meaning people give to explain others behavior and are dependent upon perceptions of others (Gudykunst, 1994). Strangers are those who come from a cultural background different from our own. "The attributions we make about

strangers are influenced by the attitudes we hold about the groups to which they belong" (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997, p. 128). We make our preconceptions about a group fit the situation. A common explanation to the low achievement of CLD students is that education is not valued by different cultural groups. People usually attribute their own behavior to situational factors while attributing the behaviors of others to inherent qualities of that person, such as their cultural background or group membership (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003).

Conclusion

Teacher preparation programs have the arduous task of preparing a primarily White teaching force to work effectively with students from CLD backgrounds. Cultural conflicts occur in the classroom when the norms and value systems of teachers and students are dissimilar. Traditional preparation programs have not been effective in preparing preservice teachers to meet the needs of CLD students with disabilities. It is generally accepted that to become interculturally competent, one must explore their own cultural identity and have an understanding of how culture affects your teaching, your communication, and your interactions with the students in your class. Preservice teachers also need to be given strategies for gathering cultural knowledge. Before this knowledge can be translated into culturally relevant instruction, teachers must carefully examine and de-construct their beliefs about culture, teaching and learning (Betsinger, et

al., 2000). General educators and special educators continue to search for the most effective methods to prepare teachers to meet the needs of a diverse student population.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

The research on special education teacher education programs for the preparation of teachers to work with students and families from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds is truly limited at this time. Few studies have been published which examine and document the impact of multicultural coursework on beginning teachers' effectiveness with CLD exceptional students. As indicated by the review of the literature for this study, existing publications about preparation programs for students from diverse backgrounds are primarily program descriptions, studies that focus on the impact of preservice courses or field experiences, studies that contain little empirical data documenting program outcomes, or studies that do not contain a discussion of the methodological and design limitations. There have been no studies that study the perceptions of graduates of special education preparation programs on this subject. An empirical examination of teacher preparation programs, using a variety of sources of data, is needed to validate the knowledge and skills essential for new teachers to provide effective instruction for the diverse students in today's classrooms.

This exploratory study was designed as a preliminary effort to develop a database about the preparation of special educators to serve CLD exceptional learners, and focused on the first-hand accounts of student teachers that are

encountering students from diverse backgrounds and being held accountable for providing appropriate instruction. I also anticipated that gathering data from prospective teachers who were completing their special education teacher preparation and would soon enter the teaching field would generate valuable insights related to the program's content and student teaching component.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to establish a database of outcomes from the perspective of student teachers in an undergraduate special education teacher preparation program and to explore the influence of student teaching experiences on these preservice teachers' perceptions about the adequacy of their preparation related to diversity. I studied how participants described and interpreted their readiness to effectively serve CLD exceptional students. The central research question guiding the study was: What are special education preservice student teachers' perceptions of their readiness to serve culturally and linguistically diverse exceptional students? The following subquestions provided a specific focus for data collection:

1. How do special education preservice student teachers define culture and what is their understanding of its influence on the teaching-learning process?

2. What are special education preservice student teacher's perceptions of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs necessary to successfully serve culturally and linguistically diverse exceptional students?

3. How does the student teaching experience affect the student teachers' perceptions about their readiness, including the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs, to successfully serve culturally and linguistically diverse exceptional students?

Research Design

This qualitative study used Naturalistic Inquiry as the guiding methodology. Emergent interviewing and debriefing sessions held after observations were the primary means of data generation. Since qualitative methods allow for exploration, discovery, and inductive thinking (Patton, 1990), I was able to explore the perceptions of special education student teachers and discover their understanding of culture and its influence on their behavior as well as the behavior of their students. Perceptions are the participants' descriptions and interpretations of a given situation (Patton, 1990). The inductive nature of naturalistic inquiry allowed me to understand the multiple interrelationships among dimensions that emerge from the data without having a priori assumptions or hypotheses about the relationships among the numerous variables in the given settings (Patton, 1990). I sought to establish relationships with my participants,

through which understandings or constructions of their experiences with CLD students would be mutually and collaboratively shaped by them and myself through dialogue. This type of research is not an exercise in determining if the participants are forming the "right" constructions or saying what they feel I want to hear. "The process of inquiry for the naturalistic researcher becomes one of developing and verifying shared constructions that will enable the meaningful expansion of knowledge" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 21).

I selected Naturalistic Inquiry for this study because the thick description of the participants and the classrooms in which they were working would allow me to communicate the setting with its multiple realities and complex relationships in a way that allows the reader to become emotionally and cognitively involved. "Naturalistic Inquiry is very dependent on context. This stems from the fundamental assumption that all subjects of such an inquiry are bound together by a complex web of unique interrelationships" (Erlandson et al, 1993, p. 12). Readers of this study will have an understanding of how prepared each participant in this group of student teachers felt to work effectively with students from culturally diverse backgrounds at the conclusion of their teacher preparation program.

The goal of this naturalistic inquiry was to develop shared constructions that explain the interactions between preservice student teachers and their CLD

students which result from the way the student teachers define culture (Hollins, 1996). I hoped to learn from student teachers about their educational and life experiences which they perceived as helpful in preparing them to work with CLD students with disabilities, and what they believed they still needed to learn to be an effective teacher. Although this study does not provide definitive answers or guidelines that are generalizable, the findings contribute to the development of a theory of "teachers as learners" in the context of this special education teacher preparation program (Erlandson et al, 1993). While the findings from this study have direct application for the program being studied, the findings may also have implications for other, similar special education teacher preparation programs.

Context of the Study

The objective of this study was to understand the perceptions and experiences of special education preservice student teachers learning to teach in a culturally and linguistically diverse setting. The participants for this study were undergraduate students in a special education teacher education program, who were completing their student teaching requirement. The demographics of the special education department closely mirrored the demographic trends of teacher education programs across the country; i.e., the majority of students enrolled in the program are White, female, and in their early twenties.

The study took place in the College of Education of a large research university in the southwest. The college offers certification in elementary and special education at the undergraduate level with approximately 136 hours of course work. The program includes a foundation of liberal arts courses, an academic specialization in special education, child development coursework, and a program of elementary education courses with an emphasis in special education (a detailed sequence of courses is presented in Appendix B). Although new state teacher certification requirements have recently been enacted, the students in the study graduated under the prior degree and certification requirements. Under the latter plan, students were awarded an all-level certificate in Generic Special Education (K-12) and an Elementary certificate (Grades 1-8). Student teaching is the final semester of their teacher preparation program. At this juncture, student teachers had successfully completed the internship requirement in an inclusive regular education placement and the course, *Instructional Methods in Special Education*. The preceding internship experience required student teachers to plan and present a minimum of 20 lessons in their assigned classroom. The methods course focused on adapting instruction for students with special needs and included a 60-hour field experience.

The college has a policy of placing student teachers in classrooms with diverse student populations. The school district in which the student teachers

completed their field placements is an increasingly diverse urban district. During the school year in which the study was conducted (2001-2002), the district had a total student enrollment of almost 79,000 students. The demographic breakdown, according to the district's website, was as follows: 14.4% African American, 2.7% Asian, 51.7% Hispanic, 0.3% Native American, and 31% White. Student teaching placements typically involved resource or self-contained special education classrooms with students with mild to moderate disabilities.

Selection of Participants

A total of 13 students were at the student teaching phase of the program during the Spring 2002 semester. Twelve students were female and one student was male. This figure was typical for the number of special education majors completing the program per semester. At the beginning of the Spring 2002 semester, I attended a class with the prospective student teachers to introduce myself and describe my study. The purpose and goal of the study was shared with all special education student teachers and their participation was solicited. All students scheduled to complete their student teaching requirement during the Spring 2002 semester in the undergraduate special education program were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire to gather pertinent background information from potential participants (See Appendix C) and given a copy of the consent form (See Appendix D).

Four female student teachers agreed to participate in the study and returned their completed demographic profiles and signed consent forms. All participants were assured that the information they share throughout the study would remain confidential. During the study, participants were asked to select a pseudonym to be used in place of their names throughout the study. Students were also assured that their participation would not have any bearing on their final evaluation. The participants completed their student teaching requirement in early May, providing a natural ending point to the study.

The four participants, Michelle, Isabel, Beth and Victoria, were all assigned to classrooms on one campus in the city where the university they were attending was located. The elementary school where they were placed had a diverse student population with over half the student population being identified as economically disadvantaged. The student teachers ranged in age from 21-23 years old.

Michelle was Euro-American and grew up in a higher SES suburb of a large city with very little interaction with diverse cultures. Michelle planned to return home for a year after graduation to save money before living on her own. She was placed in a Life-Skills class with seven students with a wide range of ability levels.

Isabel was Euro-American and grew up in a rural area. Isabel often referred to herself as a "White girl." She was planning to get married in June following graduation and finding a job where her husband would be going to graduate school in the same state. She was placed in an early childhood classroom primarily with students with speech impairments.

Beth, also Euro-American, grew up in a middle class, primarily Euro-American community. Although there was a primarily African American city nearby, she had limited contact with diverse cultures. In fact, Victoria, also a participant in the study, was her first Hispanic friend. Beth was planning on staying in the area after graduation. She was placed in a 5th grade Resource class and taught Math, Reading and Language Arts.

Victoria was Cuban-American and grew up in various places around the world. She described herself as being fluent in listening and speaking Spanish; she also had a learning disability. Victoria was planning on staying in the area and working in an Early Childhood classroom. She was placed in an Early Childhood class with students with speech impairments and one student with mental retardation.

Data Collection

Two types of data were generated for this research: interview data and field notes from scheduled observations and informal follow-up conversations. A

series of informal follow-up conversations, approximately 12 for each participant, were also held after each weekly observation to discuss the interactions I had observed in the student teaching placement. The Demographic Profile, included in Appendix D, was completed by all four participants, providing additional information about each participant. In addition, copies were obtained of the written feedback, and mid-term and final evaluations completed by the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor, as well as self-evaluations completed by the student teachers. All student names included in the excerpts of participant interviews, observation notes and follow-up sessions have been replaced with pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality.

Interviews

Interviews served as a key source of data for this study. Through the interviews, I was able to explore my participant's views of their context and to generate working hypotheses. Two formal interviews were conducted with each participant, one at the beginning and one at the conclusion of their student teaching placement. Both interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriber and then reviewed for accuracy.

The initial interview with participants took place during the first two weeks of their 11-week student teaching placement. This allowed student teachers time to become acquainted with the students in their assigned classroom, and to

observe their cooperating teacher instructing and interacting with the class; however, they were not yet responsible for providing instruction. During this time, I also visited the school to familiarize myself with the class in which each participant had been placed. The purpose of the initial interview was for me to get to know each participant and to begin to explore their views about the influence of culture on their actions and those of their students. This interview lasted approximately one hour for each participant. I used the semi-structured interview technique (Erlandson et al., 1993) in which a set of basic questions and issues were explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of questions was predetermined (Merriam, as cited in Erlandson et al., 1993). This informal approach allowed me to gain important information about my participants and establish rapport between us. The initial interview guide is presented in Appendix E. As suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), I began the interview with the warm up or "grand tour" question of "How did you get into education?" While the initial interview guide led the interview, follow-up questions were based on information shared by each participant. As is customary in a naturalistic inquiry, these interviews took "the form of a dialogue or an interaction" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 85). By the end of the initial interview, I had a broad understanding of their preparation program and field experiences, a general sense for how prepared they felt at this point in their program, and their perceptions of the characteristics

of an effective teacher of CLD students. Information shared on the demographic questionnaire was also discussed during this interview (See Appendix F for a brief excerpt from the initial interview with Michelle).

The focus of the final interview, which took place during the final week of their student teaching placement, was to reflect upon their readiness to work with students from diverse backgrounds, using the student teaching experience as the context for their perceptions. Prior to this interview, I had reviewed the transcript of the initial interview, all other requested documents, and all field notes from the debriefing sessions so that I would be able to recall the specific responses provided by each participant at the beginning of the semester. The specific questions that guided the final interview varied by participant and were based on information shared throughout the study. I asked all participants to provide me with a forwarding address so that I could continue to clarify and member check any interpretations that I had after they had graduated, since two of the four participants had planned to leave the area.

Observations of Student Teaching

Observations, followed by debriefing sessions, were also conducted for each participant approximately once a week. Particularly during the early stages of the inquiry, these observations were less structured, to allow me to expand my implicit knowledge and develop a sense of what was seminal or significant in the

study context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each visit allowed me to become more familiar with the children in the classroom in which the student teacher was completing her student teaching experience, as well as to become acquainted with the cooperating teacher. Guba and Lincoln (1981) portray observations as powerful because they allow the inquirer to see the world as his subjects see it and they maximize the inquirer's ability to grasp motives, beliefs, concerns, interests, unconscious behaviors, customs, and the like.

Data from the observations took the form of field notes. Though there were no predetermined coding categories for the observations, I was most interested in documenting the nature and quality of interactions between the student teacher and the students in her class. I kept a running record of my observations using the form found in Appendix G. My experiences as a student teaching supervisor were helpful in my ability to observe and document key instructional events and activities. My notes were a descriptive record of events as they occurred, and I made a conscious effort not to draw conclusions or make assumptions based on my observations.

Toward the middle of the semester, I prepared a list of all students I had observed in each participant's class and shared it with them to verify that I had included all of their students. I also asked them to note, on the list of students, the

race/ethnicity of each student, in their opinion or according to information shared with them, and whether or not they had met the student's parents.

During observations, I would note specific interactions with particular students to be discussed later. My notes also included verbatim quotes that I wished to discuss following the observation. Other areas I included in my observations were learning climate and management style, lesson clarity, instructional strategies, task orientation, student engagement and student success. This information assisted me in gauging the student teacher's level of comfort in working with the students in her class as well as her overall effectiveness. Observation data were used to generate debriefing questions; e.g., if I observed a difficult exchange between a student and the student teacher, I inquired about the nature of prior exchanges that may have occurred between them. Examples of the notes taken during an observation and the follow-up session that followed are included in Appendix H.

My experience as a university supervisor became a two-edged sword; though it was the foundation for my observational skills, my first instinct, initially, was to observe with the intention of providing suggestions for improvement. Once I became aware of my tendency to be evaluative, I made specific efforts to document what I was observing for the purpose of later

discussion through which I could develop an accurate understanding of each participant's context, behavior, perceptions, and experiences.

Student teachers were observed approximately every week during the course of the 11-week student teaching requirement. Observations varied in length depending on the activities for the day. A copy of their daily schedule was requested when they began their placement, which allowed me to schedule observations at varying times throughout the day. Initially, I scheduled my observations so that my visits were expected. After the first few weeks, as all participants became comfortable with my visits, I was invited to come at any time. The times of my visits varied so I could observe student teachers presenting varying subject matter and working with various groups of students. Observing each participant throughout the day allowed me to have a better understanding of the entire experience for each student teacher. I was also invited to attend the mid-term and final three-way conferences held with each student teacher's cooperating teacher, and university supervisor for three of the four student teachers. Because the student teachers' formal evaluations were discussed at these meetings, I took this as a strong indication that the participants were comfortable with and had a great deal of trust in me.

Post-Observation Follow-up Conversations

Following each observation, my participants and I met to discuss the interactions I had observed or other issues that had arisen since my last visit. Student teachers were observed at least once a week, throughout the duration of their student teaching experience. Beth was observed on ten occasions; I observed Michelle on eleven occasions. Because of their proximity to each other, I was able to observe and talk with Victoria and Isabel somewhat more frequently. They were both observed 14 times. The length of these sessions varied each time depending on my observations and the topics discussed by the participant. When possible, the follow-up session occurred immediately after the observation. This became more difficult as the semester progressed as my participants assumed progressively more responsibility for planning and presenting classroom instruction.

Toward the end of the semester, there was also a period in which they were totally responsible for the instruction for the class; student teachers must "Total Teach" for a minimum of two-weeks to fulfill this requirement. Thus, it was not possible to follow-up immediately after the observations during this period. In these instances, the follow-up sessions occurred either in person at a later time when they were available, such as naptime or after school, or by telephone. I preferred personal contact so that I was able to observe non-verbal

communication as well. Running field notes were taken of follow-up sessions done in person or by telephone. We discussed interactions I had observed between my participant and any CLD students who were observed or mentioned by the participant, decisions regarding her choice of specific instructional strategies, and updates on students who had been discussed previously. I also wanted to gain a sense for their perceptions of how well things were going and their interpretations of events occurring in the classroom.

Although I was gaining a great deal of insight into the participants, I was concerned that some of my questions would not be fully answered by the conclusion of the study because of the informal nature of these conversations. Consequently, after the mid-term three-way conferences, I developed a list of questions to ask each participant to refresh their memory about the original purpose of the study. Example questions include "So far, do you think you were prepared for your student teaching experience?" and "How do you think your students' cultural background affects how they are doing in your class?" These questions were answered during a follow-up session or by telephone.

Written Feedback and Evaluations From Cooperating Teachers and University Supervisors

Copies of the written feedback provided to the student teacher from their cooperating teacher and their university supervisor following their observations

provided an additional source of data for this study. Student teachers are typically observed 7-10 times per semester by their cooperating teacher and university supervisor. After each observation, the student teacher typically receives verbal and written feedback. I reviewed the written feedback to identify any additional topics to inquire about during the debriefing sessions. The written feedback also provided additional insight about interactions between the student teacher and the class while I was not present. The student teachers were very cooperative about providing me with a copy of their feedback as they received it throughout the semester. At the end of the study, all were very conscientious about ensuring that I had received a copy of all their written feedback.

Evaluations of each participant were completed by each cooperating teacher and university supervisor at mid-term and at the conclusion of the semester. The evaluation form contains sets of indicators in the following domains: Instructional Strategies, Classroom Management and Organization, Presentation of Subject Matter, Learning Environment, and Professionalism. An overall rating is given for each domain and each indicator is marked as an area of strength or weakness. An overall rating for student teaching performance is given and an area for a recommendation to be written is provided on the form.

Self-Evaluations

Using the form utilized for mid-term and final evaluations completed by the cooperating teacher and university supervisor, student teachers are required to complete a self-evaluation; this evaluation was discussed at the mid-term three-way conference between the student teacher, university supervisor, and cooperating teacher. A second self-evaluation is completed at the conclusion of the student teaching placement for the final three-way conference. These documents were requested to gain additional information concerning the student teachers' self-assessments and perceptions of their readiness and their growth during the semester.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was an ongoing process that began the day I met with the participants as a group. "The collection and analysis of the data obtained go hand-in-hand as theories and themes emerge during the study" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 111). Initial and final interviews were transcribed soon after each one was conducted to ensure fidelity of the data. Two professional transcribers were used for the initial transcription of each interview. I then reviewed each tape and transcript for verification. Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method was used in this study to build working hypotheses during the analysis process. This process guided the coding of the interview transcripts.

An initial analysis was conducted to gain a sense of emerging themes. Transcripts were then divided into meaningful chunks of data and appropriately labeled. The labels assigned were descriptive and frequently used the participant's own words. The following excerpt was taken from Beth's initial interview. The label assigned to each chunk is given below in parentheses.

> **Laura:** Okay. Whenever you completed the demographic profile, you identified yourself as White. Can you tell me why you characterized yourself that way?
>
> **Beth:** I don't know how **else** to. Blond, blue haired, pale skin kind of….gives me away. (labeled "blond, blue eyes, pale skin")
>
> **Laura:** So, and that's exactly what I mean, because different people call themselves different things.
>
> **Beth:** Yeah. I couldn't really tell you exactly where my family if from, long time ago…My grandmother told me a long time ago and I have already forgotten. (labeled "forgotten where family is from")
>
> It's really sad. I think my last name is German. And it used to be [old family name] (Laughs) …I have no idea. My grandmother has done a genealogy on our family. I should go ask her. But I really don't know…It is so sad… (labeled "sad don't know about family")
>
> **Laura:** So what racial or ethnic group would you say you are more familiar with?
>
> **Beth:** Like in school….I would have to say, African American, that is the majority of who I have worked with. (labeled "mostly worked with African American")
>
> Before, it was White all the way. You know, because that's only kids I ever saw. (labeled "White all the way")

Like my family and my elementary school, you know, I would have to say at least 90% you know, White, the whole district. (labeled "whole district White")

Laura: Really? Is there a group you are more comfortable with at this point, do you think?

Beth: Not really… (labeled "comfortable with all groups")

Laura: Culture is one of those words that you can define in many ways, so what does it mean to you, that term culture?

Beth: God….Oh

Laura: You didn't have to think of this in [instructor's name] class?

Beth: Well, that was a long time ago. And that was when it meant only one, one or two different things probably. It was like simpler. I had a much simpler mind, I guess. I don't know. (labeled "used to have simpler mind")

Just the beliefs…culture to me, is my family and my church and my beliefs as a person and as a teacher. I don't know, just everything about who a person is and what makes them who they are… (labeled "definition of culture")

Laura: So what effect do you think culture has on your behavior and that of your students?

Beth: Well, I think, it has a lot to do, with the way I am who I am, for sure. I try to not, but it has so much to do…you know…that is the hard part. Trying to think of it. Think outside of the box. Get out of your box, and get into the box of people in other boxes, you know… (labeled "influence of culture")

After the chunks had been named, I looked for any patterns that seemed to appear in the data. These chunks of data were then grouped to form categories. The labels

assigned to the individual chunks from the interview excerpt above were placed in categories such as "family history," "definition of culture," and "influence of culture."

Categories of related chunks were grouped together to form themes. Categories and themes were then adjusted as data continued to be gathered and analyzed by renaming, adding and/or removing categories as needed. The chunks listed in the category, "family history," were included in a theme that appeared in Beth's data ultimately labeled "Blond-haired, Blue-Eyed, White Girl."

Data from field notes taken during observations and follow-up sessions were also analyzed as described for interview data. The following excerpt is from the "Notes from Follow-up Session" following an observation of Beth in early April. There were six students in the Language Arts resource class that morning. The entire observation record is available in Appendix H.

> Disaster drill – important b/c last fall there was tornados & kids were kept (labeled "necessary drills")
>
> Words, thought they would know some, or most, she knew backstop 'cause she had played softball (labeled "assumed knowledge")
>
> Sad they wanted to talk about being arrested, like they knew people who had, so it was not a big deal (labeled "experiences with law")
>
> Also that they thought backhand was a slap, not a tennis swing, (labeled "experiences with physical punishment")
>
> She grew up lucky, not rich, but she knew her parents cared (labeled "lucky because parents cared")

Efforts to Ensure Trustworthiness

As the researcher, I made every effort to assure the trustworthiness of my findings by taking measures to assure credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Erlandson et al., 1993). Naturalistic inquiry assumes the existence of multiple realities; thus credibility is measured by the compatibility of the constructed realities that exist in the minds of the participants in the inquiry with those that are ascribed to them. Methods that I used to establish credibility were: member checks, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, and the maintenance of a reflexive journal.

Member checking allowed the participant to ensure the accuracy of my interpretations of the information shared during the interviews or observation debriefing session. As a constructivist researcher, I recognize that my observations and interpretations of meaning in this naturalistic inquiry were greatly affected by my own beliefs, attitudes, values, and personal history. I bring certain constructed realities to the research setting and expect to find other constructions of reality among my participants. "The process of inquiry for the naturalistic researcher becomes one of developing and verifying shared constructions that will enable the meaningful expansion of knowledge" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 21).

Member checking is a process that is done continuously and can be formal or informal. I used informal member checking during the interview itself or in the debriefing session following an observation. I consistently questioned participants to clarify or expand on issues as they arose during the study. Formal member checking took the form of a written summary of my understandings. I invited participants to review the transcripts of the interviews and add or modify anything they wished to change. I also shared with them how I had categorized parts of their interviews relating specifically to my research questions. This allowed for an additional opportunity to modify or clarify their statements. Following each interview, I developed a summary of the interview that was shared with them with the request to change, or clarify anything that I may have misinterpreted. This gave me the opportunity to refer "data and interpretations back to data sources for correction/verification/challenge" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 108-109).

One participant, Michelle, made several modifications and additions to her initial interview and final summary. While the majority of the changes were editing for grammatical correctness, there were also some modifications made that were to clarify or expand on a topic we had discussed. The other participants made very few or no changes or modifications. Many of the revisions made to the interviews were to correct grammatical errors on the transcripts. I explained that the transcript was a record of our interview and that conversational language is

typically very different from the written form. Although the changes made were inconsequential and ultimately did not change my conclusions, they are reflected in the final revision of the findings.

Personal factors that may have influenced my data generation, reduction, analysis, and theme discovery are discussed in the introduction to Chapter One. It was important for me to attempt to share the constructions of those I was investigating. While the shared constructions do not have to be identical, they must be compatible so that communication can take place. Attempts to develop these compatible constructions guided much of my data collection and analysis.

Prolonged engagement and persistent observation were also used to ensure credibility. This entailed spending enough time in the classrooms being studied and with the student teachers to recognize and overcome any distortions due to the impact of my presence on the students in the classroom or on the student teacher. It was necessary for me to understand daily events in the ways that the student teachers interpreted them. I observed and debriefed with student teachers throughout the duration of their student teaching placement, resulting in a minimum of 15-20 hours of observations and informal conversations for each participant. Persistent observation is important because it "helps the researcher sort out relevancies from irrelevancies and determine when the atypical case is important" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 137). This extended period of observation

and debriefing as well as my past experience as a university supervisor aided in ensuring that prolonged engagement and persistent observation were achieved.

The use of a peer-debriefing group during my study also ensured trustworthiness. This group was comprised of between four to seven doctoral students or candidates in the Special Education Department along with a faculty advisor. The size of the group was dependent on what stage of their dissertation, such as development of the literature review, data collection or data analysis, each member was at. The group met regularly, either monthly or bi-weekly, throughout data collection and shared their perceptions, insight and analyses of the data being collected. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe debriefing by peers as "systematically talking through research experiences, findings, and decisions with non-involved professional peers for a variety of purposes—catharsis, challenge, design of next steps, or legitimization" (p. 109). This group served to provide me feedback that, at times, refined and redirected the inquiry process and facilitated the analysis process.

Dependability is synonymous with the term "consistency" and refers to the issues of replication of the study (Erlandson et al., 1993). Because of the nature of naturalistic inquiry, it is assumed that the results of a study cannot be truly replicated. However, naturalistic inquirers are concerned with the question "If this study were done again, would variance in the results be traceable?" To answer

this question, I maintained a reflexive journal where I recorded my initial impressions and events that may have influenced my interpretation of the specific situations. The reflexive journal is documentation of my thoughts, decisions, and the progression of data analysis throughout the study (A brief excerpt from my reflexive journal is included in Appendix I). I reviewed my reflexive journal throughout my analysis of the data. The maintenance of a reflexive journal also helped to assure confirmability, which is concerned with the extent to which the findings represent my participants' perspectives rather than my perspectives. Taken together, these measures were utilized to ensure the dependability, confirmability, and credibility of the findings in this research.

Anticipated Significance of Study

Application of a naturalistic study can be of two types: "We can obtain direction for dealing with the same setting in the future or for further inquiry about similar settings" (Erlandson et al., p. 17). As a proponent of naturalistic inquiry, instead of generalizations, I am seeking a deep understanding of this group of student teachers' awareness of the influence of culture and how this understanding affects their feelings of readiness to work with CLD students. Because generalizations are truly not possible due to variations across contexts, this study's findings are defined by the specific contexts in which they were manifested. However, because transferability across contexts may occur as a

result of shared characteristics, and will be facilitated by the development of detailed descriptions of the interrelationships and intricacies of the context being studied, the decision of applicability is ultimately left up to the reader. The transfer of understandings across social contexts depends on the degree to which the thick description of one set of interrelationships in one social context allows for the formulation of working hypotheses that can direct inquiry in another (Guba, 1981). This study provides feedback for the special education teacher preparation program in which my participants were enrolled as well as information that is potentially helpful to teacher preparation programs with student enrollments similar to the group that participated in this study.

It is anticipated that this study will provide special education teacher educators with valuable insight into the experiences of student teachers learning to work with CLD exceptional learners. These findings can serve to inform teacher preparation programs so that they can better design educational experiences that enable students to become effective educators of CLD students with disabilities. By learning the perceptions of readiness of this group of program graduates, teacher preparation programs can develop coursework and design field experiences that allow students to feel more confident in their abilities to work with students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

CHAPTER IV

STUDY FINDINGS

Four students who were completing their student teaching field placement in special education settings during the Spring 2002 semester agreed to participate in the study. Early in the semester, the participants chose a pseudonym to be used in place of their name throughout this document. Three of the four—Michelle, Isabel, and Beth—were Euro-American; one, Victoria, was Cuban. All were in their early 20's and expected to graduate after completing this final semester of their teacher preparation program.

The school district in which the student teachers were completing their student teaching had a total student enrollment of close to 79,000 students. The demographic breakdown of the student population of the district during the 2001-2002 school year was 51.7% Hispanic, 14.4% African American, 31% White, and 3% Asian/Native American. All four participants were placed at the same elementary campus in the southern part of the district in which the university was located. The campus had a student enrollment of 643 students in grades Pre-K through five for the 2001–2002 school year. Approximately 58% of the school's student population was Hispanic, 11% was African American, and 31% was White. Fifty-one percent of the student population was identified as "economically disadvantaged". In the state of Texas, schools were given an

accountability rating based on their performance on the state-mandated achievement test, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), for the 2001-2002 school year. The school where my participants were placed had an accountability rating of "Recognized", which signified that 80 % of students across all ethnic and economic groups passed the TAAS. All names of the children in the student teaching setting that are mentioned in the participant profiles and following discussion have been changed to protect their confidentiality.

The following chapter includes a profile for each participant. A discussion of the common themes among the four participants concludes this chapter. The terms "Euro-American" and "White" are used to represent those from European backgrounds in the following chapters depending on the particular context. Euro-American was the term used in the demographic profile and sometimes, I used the term Euro-American in our conversations; therefore, the participants used Euro-American sparingly. The majority of the time, we all used the word "White" to refer to individuals from European backgrounds (including three of my participants).

Participant Profiles

The student teachers who agreed to take part in this study had a broad range of background experiences that impacted how each experienced the student

teaching placement. A profile for each student teacher was developed to give the reader a detailed description of each study participant. Because there were topics that were significant to the study, they were discussed with each participant. Each profile includes information about their personal background, how they decided to pursue teaching as a career, information about their previous field experiences, and a description of their current placement. Because Beth and Victoria both planned to stay in the area, we were able to discuss the teaching positions they were interested in obtaining for the following school year. The discussion of the position they ultimately accepted is included in their profiles. At the conclusion of the study, Isabel and Michelle had not yet accepted a position for the following year.

Michelle

Contact with diverse groups was the topic of a question included on the demographic profile completed by each study participant. Michelle shared on the demographic profile that she had attended public schools where the teaching staff and the student body were primarily Euro-American. She noted having occasional contact with Hispanic students in elementary and middle school. In high school, she noted that she often had contact with African American and Hispanic students; she described some of her friends in high school as being Mexican-American. Currently, she often has contact with diverse groups.

Michelle was placed in an elementary life skills classroom for her student teaching placement. Her cooperating teacher had been teaching for more than 10 years and a teaching assistant was also assigned to the classroom for the entire day. The two had been working together for several years. There were nine students (five boys, four girls) of varying ability levels in Michelle's assigned class. Of these, two students came in for short periods during the day. Michelle described two of the boys as Caucasian, and three boys as Hispanic. Of the girls, one was African American, one Caucasian, and two Hispanic.

Growing Up in a Bubble. Michelle was 23 years old at the time of the study. She grew up in a suburb of a large metropolitan area in the Southwest, comprised of mostly upper-income, Euro-American families. When her mother worked, it was as a nurse practitioner although she did not work at times while Michelle was growing up; her father was a computer consultant. Both parents had master's degrees and she was expected to continue her education following high school. Michelle reported that her parents knew they lived a sheltered life.

> The town I grew up in was known as a 'bubble' because of the lack of diversity and high economic status. My parents tried to do their best to expose my sister and I to other experiences that were not provided in the 'bubble.'

They wanted to be sure Michelle was aware of the realities for other people who did not share their social class background. Michelle remembered going to a friend's house and coming back upset because her friend's pool was bigger than their pool. "I asked my mom if we were poor." The next day, her mother took her downtown to a homeless shelter. "She was like, 'This child needs to be aware of what's really going on'." Michelle added that her mother did this to show her that not all people were as fortunate and to instill in her the importance of giving to others. Michelle was encouraged to volunteer; e.g., at a homeless shelter or with Special Olympics. Michelle attended the Catholic church when she was growing up. Although she was encouraged to explore other religions "to really understand the importance of faith," her father felt strongly that Michelle remain a Catholic.

How Michelle Became a Teacher. Michelle remembered never wanting to be a teacher. "I had no desire to be a teacher. It is not something that I wanted to do, you know, as a little girl….I was like, 'Oooh, who would want to be a teacher?'" She had been involved in several extracurricular activities while in high school, but "dropped out" of them during her senior year. Her principal became concerned when she stopped participating in activities such as yearbook and sports. So, she asked Michelle to be a peer buddy to a life skills class.

> I loved it. I fell in love with my kids and I still remember the exact moment…that I wanted to become a teacher. The teacher asked a student

> to put his backpack on the floor. He said 'No.' The aide immediately came over and restrained him while the teacher took his backpack. This caused the student to become angry and they sent him to time-out. I remember thinking that I would have done things differently. I felt that they approached him aggressively and didn't give him time enough to respond. That is when I wanted to be a teacher.

Michelle already knew she wanted to be a special education teacher, "just from being with those kids," referring to the students in the life skills class in which she first was a peer buddy. She spent a great deal of time volunteering with Special Olympics and also babysat for a young girl with disabilities. Michelle decided that "teaching would probably be the best way to really get in touch with these kids and help them", and felt that being a special education teacher is rewarding in many ways.

> It is just their smiles. I just love being around…I mean, I think it is great when you are doing a lesson and you get to see them learning and you get to see progress. But I still…I just love their smiles. I think they have such sweet spirits. I just love being with them. Just getting to know them, their personalities. I think it is great.

Michelle struggled with the type of teacher, special or general education, she wanted to be. In Michelle's teacher preparation program, students are required

to complete an internship field placement in a general education setting prior to student teaching. Initially, Michelle wanted to work only with students with disabilities. As she completed her internship experience in a general education setting, she thought she might change her mind.

> I mean, it was funny, because at first I was like, 'Oh, I only want to do special ed. I never want to do general ed.' But when I did my general ed. setting, I loved it… I was surprised how much I liked general ed. I still want to go into special ed., but could definitely see myself doing general ed. for a couple of years.

Michelle's Valuable Experiences. Michelle completed her internship experience in a general education third grade classroom with a cooperating teacher who she described as "great." Michelle had worked with children before, but this was her first experience in a classroom setting. There were a few students with disabilities who were mainstreamed as well as some students identified as gifted. She described the cooperating teacher as "wonderful"; she taught Michelle how to adapt her instruction and assignments for the different levels of students in the class. Initially Michelle had been unsure how to modify her lessons, but with the help of her cooperating teacher, she eventually became more confident in making such modifications.

Michelle's next field experience, a 60-hour requirement of the special education instructional methods course, was in a special education resource classroom, and was not as positive for her as her experience in the general education classroom from the previous semester. She liked her teacher, and of course, she loved her students, but she did not feel the same level of support as she had in her first field experience.

> …I don't think a lot of the assignments were relevant to our students…our professor was like, well, this is what you have to do for the class…Yeah, I love Dr. [Jones] but it's just …the program, I just think that it kind of, you know, went against so much of what special ed. is, because she had these things that she wanted us to do for the class, that we had to do. You will do partner reading with your kids. But we go in and sometimes that wasn't appropriate for our kids…. It wasn't too flexible…me, I think we should, come up with another way, to help these kids…So, I mean I still learned…but I didn't like it as much as I liked my first semester.

Although she was somewhat frustrated, Michelle valued her first special education placement. Having experienced both general and special education placements, she was not sure where she would prefer to teach, general education, special education resource or life skills.

Michelle's Great Kids. Michelle's two previous field experiences were in two elementary schools with diverse student populations having a large percentage of students from families with middle to lower incomes. Because of the lack of diversity in the schools Michelle had attended while she was growing up, she felt it was tremendously valuable that her field experience placements had been in schools with diverse student enrollments. Michelle described the families of students with whom she interacted as being very supportive of their children and being very loving. Her current cooperating teacher had commented early in the semester that there was not a great deal of parental involvement with her current class, but Michelle was trying to make her own judgments instead of relying on others' opinions. However, Michelle noted that she had only met two of her current student's parents and had not received letters back that she sent home. To Michelle, the lack of response to her letter could be interpreted as an indicator of uninvolved parents, which would confirm her cooperating teacher's opinion that the parents of the students in her class were not active participants in their child's education.

Attending her first ARD meeting was an exciting event during the semester. The meeting—for Sara, a 3rd grade student with Down's syndrome—went very smoothly. Michelle's cooperating teacher warned her that not all ARD meetings were as successful, but it was "nice to have one where everyone was on

the same page…It was nice to finally go to one, because you hear so much…the past four years, these ARD meetings…but it was cool to see, how they actually go…" Both parents came to the meeting and were genuinely appreciative for the school's efforts.

> They were saying that it was really amazing what the school district and the teachers do for their child. And my teacher just responded back, 'Well that's what she deserves.' And that was so cool. Yeah. She deserves it…yeah she *does* deserve it. It really hit home about what special education is.

Though she was glad that her first ARD was a good experience, Michelle also wanted to see a meeting that did not go as smoothly, so that she would know what to be prepared for. Her experience with Sara's parents also contradicted her cooperating teacher's judgment that the parents of the students in the class were not actively involved.

I asked Michelle often about different students in her class or how she felt things were going, to gain an understanding of how successful she felt with a group of students who represented such a wide range of abilities. The following is the description Michelle gave of the students in her assigned class.

> There's three children with Down's Syndrome. The other kids have mental retardation and speech impairments. There is also one boy with

> ‘Hunter Syndrome’, which is a degenerative disease that affects cognitive and physical abilities. It is interesting, one of the kids, his IEP is to be able to wash his hands in sequence, while this other kid, he is doing addition and subtraction, so it is just really interesting because they are all at different places, different levels.

A challenging task in her current placement was “finding out what level each student was on.” When asked how she would describe her class to someone who had not seen it and she replied, “They are a group of kids from diverse backgrounds and they all have different needs; I would say they are incredible, they are awesome kids.” When I asked which of her students had she had the most trouble with, she mentioned two students, Sara and Kenneth. Sara did not like having another teacher in the classroom, and would get “snippy” with her. The cooperating teacher shared that Sara “gets away with a lot more at home” than she does in the classroom, so it took a while for her to accept Michelle as someone in a position of authority in the room. Kenneth, the other student, was almost completely non-verbal, which seemed to pose a challenge for Michelle.

> It has really been a struggle for me to try to figure out what I need to do with him, like how do I get him to talk or how do I get to him…how do I really reach him, because sometimes I feel like I am not, and it is really frustrating.

With Kenneth, she wanted to know "how to communicate with him and read his feelings, desires, interests and thoughts." As the semester progressed, she became more familiar with all her students. As she became better acquainted with Sara and Kenneth, she felt more comfortable working with them. In fact, by the end of the semester, she developed a preference for working with Sara and Kenneth because she could focus more on life skills with them.

During our final interview, I also asked Michelle to name her favorite student to work with, in order to elicit her perceptions about the students in her class. She found this a difficult question and replied that she loved them all—each one was so different and presented different challenges to her. The students with higher abilities were very different from the students with lower abilities. The former were working on reading and written work while the others were concentrating more on life skills. She was not able to say which group she preferred because she truly enjoyed working with all her students.

"Finding out exactly where I [she] fit in the classroom" was one of the biggest concerns for Michelle during her student teaching. She was not always sure of what she should be doing and did not want to do anything she was not supposed to. After a short time, she was able to find her niche in the classroom and knew where she fit in with her cooperating teacher and the teaching assistant in the room.

In summary, Michelle grew up in a primarily upper-income neighborhood and described living a sheltered life; she acknowledges limited interaction with those from diverse backgrounds. She enjoyed her field placements but got mixed messages about the meaning of varying levels of parental involvement. While Michelle originally had not considered becoming a teacher, she now was excited about her career choice. Although she thought she would be a special education teacher, she was looking forward to also working in a general education classroom sometime in the future.

Isabel

According to the demographic profile, Isabel grew up in a rural area in which most families were lower income and Euro-American. The teaching staff and student enrollment of the schools she attended were predominantly Euro-American in the public schools Isabel attended; she described her circle of friends as being White until she began college. In middle school, she began to have more contact with Hispanics, and by high school, Isabel was having daily contact with African-American and Hispanic students. She now encounters diverse groups on a daily basis.

For her student teaching placement, Isabel was placed in an inclusive early childhood classroom, which served students with primarily speech-language impairments. There were 12 students in the class (7 boys, 5 girls) who ranged in

age from 3-5 years. Another girl joined the class mid-semester following her third birthday for a total of thirteen students in all.

A White Girl. When the study took place, Isabel was 23 and preparing to be married in June, following graduation. Her mother was a homemaker and her father was a farmer and auctioneer. Isabel always thought she could do whatever she wanted in life.

> Well, I had good teachers, and my family has always been very supportive, and my mom has been open to different things at home. I had a structured home life and school life, but I have always had people that [sic] have let me do my own thing and supported different options and not squash them or say, 'No, you can't do them' or 'No, that is not possible'. I have never had anybody tell me that. No, I think that has probably helped me to become what I am.

Upon graduating from college, Isabel planned to get a job in the area where her husband would be attending graduate school. During our time together, Isabel often joked that she was a "White girl". The fact that Isabel was Euro-American seemed to be more noticeable at different times during the semester. Isabel worked with two early childhood teachers; one was her cooperating teacher and the other worked in an adjoining room. Both cooperating teachers were Euro-American and had been teaching together for nine years. The latter teacher was

also the cooperating teacher for Victoria, another student teacher from the same cohort who also participated in the study. There were several times when both cooperating teachers were not in the room and the two student teachers would be planning with the teaching assistants from both classrooms. The other student teacher, Victoria, was Cuban and the three teaching assistants were all Hispanic; all four spoke Spanish. At times like this, Isabel would say she was "just a White girl", and that she didn't understand something the same way the others did. During one of my debriefings, she discussed possible names for her future children. She wanted her children to have a name that "didn't sound 'White'", such as Isabel. She was fond of the way the name, Isabel, sounded leading her to select this name for her pseudonym to be used throughout this study.

Bigger Heart for Those Who Need Extra Help. During our first interview, we talked about how Isabel decided to become a teacher. "I actually was going into social work first." Though this was what she originally wanted to do, she changed her mind when she got to know the mother of a friend. The friend's mother described her job as a great deal of paperwork where "the kids didn't like her and the parent's didn't like her." After talking with her, Isabel realized that this description was quite different from her conceptions of social work, so "I started looking at education."

A deaf friend in junior high helped her realize she wanted to be a special education teacher. The friend's mother would come to school everyday and interpret for her daughter. Isabel went on to learn American Sign Language because "to be able to talk to her I had to go through her mom and it drove me nuts." Isabel also had a friend who worked with young children with disabilities whom she spent some time observing. "And I don't know, just something special about them. I mean all of her kids are great, but I have a bigger heart for those ones that need extra help, a little extra push."

Isabel's Diverse Experiences. For Isabel, a fulfilling aspect of working with children with disabilities was watching a child be able to do something he or she was struggling with. Isabel described her experience working in schools with diverse student populations as follows: "My students, I loved…I loved working at lower SES schools…they have primarily been Hispanic or bilingual, but primarily Hispanic." When asked, during our first interview, how she would describe the families of the students she is working with, Isabel said that she had not met many parents of her current students, but did discuss her earlier experiences in a bilingual classroom. She felt frustrated about not knowing Spanish and being very limited in the degree and quality of interaction she could have with parents who spoke only Spanish. Although she was not able to have one-on-one communication, she did observe that the families she saw were "very loving with

their children, they are very open." From these observations and the little she could understand of conversations held in her presence, it appeared to her that the parents wanted to be involved. "But, like the moms that I have seen, they come in and they give their child a hug, they give them a kiss, they talk to them." The parents would tell their child to have fun in school and make arrangements for them to be picked up after school, "…and they are a family."

These comments were somewhat incongruous with other statements she made about the families of students with whom she was currently working. Isabel thought some of her students came from homes that "aren't very well structured" with parents who are not home most of the time. "So it is real rewarding to me to help them and to have them be able to have somebody that has structure and is there for them so…that is what I like the most." Isabel struggled with what she described as "seeing how the children are raised in their homes." Several times during the semester, she expressed amazement that children three times younger than her had already had to deal with traumatic events in their lives. To Isabel, it seemed as though "a lot of the kids had experiences like that." She seemed distressed as she narrated stories about children who seemed, to her, to be neglected or who had experienced a distressing event in their young lives. One story she shared was about a boy who was in her class the previous semester who had been hit by a car when he was two. "He was telling me about how he was in

the hospital for three months and it was because nobody was watching him. They were having a birthday party, and…." She really did not know how to respond when he chose to write about this incident for a writing assignment in class. Another incident Isabel described involved driving home one night after 11:00 p.m. with Beth, another student teacher who participated in the study. They saw about six children whom they thought could not have been more than 10 years old walking on the street in a fairly "rough" neighborhood.

> And I thought, 'where are these children, …you know where are these children's parents?' …and Beth said 'you know you have got to think about it, their parents, that's probably how they grew up, it is a repeat pattern.' I thought how sad, you know. It's the same pattern over and over again.

Finally, Isabel also shared the story of a young Mexican girl whose father was murdered. "Her father went to Mexico and robbers came and shot down their van. And she saw her father killed, in front of her." It appeared as if Isabel was frustrated that parents would allow their children to be in such dangerous situations while she was also in awe of how some of her students had prevailed over such difficult experiences.

Isabel's previous two field placements had been in schools that served a diverse student population, mostly from low-income families. As she described

these prior experiences, there was a marked distinction between the two field placements. Isabel described working in a 2nd grade general education bilingual class, working with all subject areas, as an experience she would always remember. Isabel portrayed this semester as "the perfect first experience; my supervisor and my teacher and my kids were amazing." One of her most enjoyable days that semester was a day when her cooperating teacher was absent. Isabel had to teach that day, which was an interesting experience for her since she did not speak Spanish and students in the class represented a wide range of English proficiency. Some of the students completed their assignments in Spanish while others worked in English and Spanish. Isabel struggled to work with five students who were Spanish-dominant: "I had no clue, you know, I didn't even know how to pronounce the work." These girls helped her learn how to say some of the words. This was a very rewarding experience for Isabel and the girls were "…so proud that they got to teach the teacher." Isabel described the team she worked with that semester as very supportive and willing to help one another. She reported that this experience was a strong contrast to her next field placement, the 60-hour field experience that was part of the special education instructional methods course.

Isabel was placed in a 4th grade resource class working with students in both Language Arts and Math. This was a challenging placement for Isabel given that:

> …my teaching philosophy was a little bit different than the teacher I was with…She was in a resource room and you know, you want explicit and you want to be sure that you…at least one on one or in groups and she didn't have them in different groups. Every child was the same spelling list. Every child did the same reading…there were kids reading at primary and 3rd grade level and she had them doing the same spelling words and…it was horrible.

This placement took place in a school that had just opened three years earlier. There were about 700 students, with about 97% of them coming from non-White backgrounds and a large number with Spanish as their home language. "As you walk down the halls [and] everything is written in Spanish, so that is kind of nice." However, overall, she had numerous concerns about students in this school and worried that the teachers did not question certain decisions made concerning special education students in particular. "I wasn't impressed at all with the administration…like the 3rd grade girl that was supposed to be in a life skills class, they didn't bus her to a different school." According to Isabel, the student was just placed in a different classroom every few weeks. When the class she was

currently in was scheduled to go on a field trip, "…the principal didn't want to hire an aide so she pretty much told her, she could go to any classroom, put her in the classroom that isn't going [on the field trip] and she will be fine, instead of … hiring an aide." Her cooperating teacher shared this story with her, "but she didn't do anything."

Looking through the comprehensive folders of students she was working with at the same school, Isabel also noticed that a majority of the parents rarely came to an ARD meeting. Throughout her placement at the school, she commented that she did not see a great deal of effort to work around the schedules of parents, which surely resulted in low attendance rates by working parents. Another concern of hers was the apparent lack of collaboration and support among teachers. "The resource teachers were…I never saw another resource teacher come in and talk and compare and discuss. I didn't see any of that going on." That special education placement was significantly different from her current placement.

A Great Team to Work With. The only two early childhood classrooms in the school were housed in the same portable building and shared restrooms. There were two teaching assistants assigned to the class next door and one in Isabel's room. The two classes worked very closely together, planning together and even coordinating center time so that children could move between centers in both

rooms. Isabel characterized the early childhood teachers as "a great team over there [in the portable building housing the early childhood program]…they are wonderful." This was an especially beneficial setting because fellow cohort member, Victoria, was placed with the early childhood teacher next door. This allowed and encouraged a great deal of collaboration. It was also beneficial because both student teachers had the opportunity to see a wider range of teaching styles and behavior management techniques.

> During her initial interview, Isabel described her class the following way: My class now is…it is very…it is about half white and half Hispanic, I guess, I don't know…Yea, I was trying to think, I don't know, I haven't really thought about it. I haven't like had lot of blond blue-eyed kids in my class.

When I asked about her class later in the semester, Isabel identified four boys as White and three as Hispanic. She identified two of the girls as White, two as Hispanic, and one as African American. She also said one girl was White and Filipino, "the child of a man and his mail-order bride." Isabel described her students as being close in ability level. "…It is a great class, very well organized, and structured. That is what I like, very predictable for the kids." Isabel also talked about how nice it was to have such an experienced cooperating teacher.

She was learning a great deal from her, such as how to document "everything" to demonstrate progress on IEPs.

Isabel also appreciated that the teaching assistant in her room was bilingual in Spanish. When the teaching assistant would say a word in both languages, she thought students got "a kick out of that." Isabel also thought having someone in the room who spoke Spanish also helped with parents, because she could "talk with them in their own natural language."

Isabel thought her cooperating teacher helped her the most with behavior management. She described her as a teacher who was firm and redirected students when necessary, but she was not overbearing. Isabel felt that behavior management was one of the most difficult skills to learn. She struggled with how firm she should be. Isabel described herself as a very positive person, "probably too positive." She added that being positive all the time is not necessarily good.

> Oh, yesterday…In my lesson, it wasn't very good. I need behavior management. So, my problem is I am too open…and I won't say positive, but…I wasn't strict enough. I was afraid about being too negative…that is very difficult for me to do, because with my other kids I have never had to do that. They have always been very…'Please sit down,' and they do it, with three, four and five year olds, you can't do that.

Keeping the attention of three year-olds was hard. Isabel described her class as challenging, but fun. Each student was unique and could make her laugh. There was "never a dull minute." She enjoyed just being with them.

Throughout the semester, Isabel also visited the kindergarten classes into which some of her students would be transitioning to next year. She noticed that one teacher used positive reinforcement a great deal and her students responded well. Isabel then made a strong effort to also let students know when she liked what they were doing. One example of the effective use of positive reinforcement occurred with a student who was experiencing difficulty when he went to his special area classes, physical education, music and art. He had been "goofing off" and not listening. As part of his behavior intervention plan (BIP), he wore a necklace to his special area classes that had cards with a smiley face or a face with a frown. His classroom teacher was then able to know immediately how well he had behaved during his special area class depending on which card was displayed when he returned to class. Receiving positive feedback as soon as he returned to class had made a dramatic improvement in his behavior.

Isabel also saw the difference that positive reinforcement made in the behavior of one of her students with whom she had had struggled at the beginning of her placement. "He wouldn't listen to me, in small group, he wouldn't follow directions. I would send him out of the group, he didn't care…" She tried hard to

get to know him, communicated with his parents with the daily notebook, and praised him more. By the end of her placement, he had become a very attentive student. "…In my group, he is the one I praised, and he was sitting there and it is amazing how different he is now." As the semester progressed, it was gratifying when students began seeing her as a teacher, and would come to her instead of the cooperating teacher when they had a problem.

As she was finishing her student teaching, I asked her what guidance she would give to a new student teacher. Her advice would be to be open to new ideas and flexible. Isabel also thought it is very important to get to know your students, and to build a strong relationship with your cooperating teacher as well as the teaching assistant in the classroom.

> … if you have an assistant, listen to them, because they do know. That assistant may be an assistant but she is a teacher, she has been teaching these kids for at least two to three years, or however long, she knows the kids. She knows what is best for them.

Isabel also suggested carefully observing your cooperating teacher when she is modifying activities for different students or groups. She also would encourage the new student teacher to ask questions, attend as many ARD and parent meetings as she can, and be prepared to get very little sleep.

In conclusion, Isabel was a "White girl" who loved working with students from lower income families. She was grateful to be placed with an experienced teacher who worked collaboratively with the teacher next to her. Isabel was concerned about the home situations for many of her students and felt lucky to be able to provide them with a "structured" classroom environment.

Beth

Beth indicated on the demographic profile that she grew up in a suburban, mostly Euro-American, middle-income area. The schools she attended had a primarily Euro-American student population and teaching staff. While growing up, Beth only had occasional contact with Asian and Hispanic students; currently, she has daily contact with Asian and Hispanic students. She rarely had contact with African-American students, and now, she often has contact with African-Americans. Beth identified her childhood friends as mostly Euro-American. Her current circle of friends was also mostly Euro-American, although she noted that this group was a mixture of White and Hispanic, "but several more friends than ever before of different ethnicities."

Beth was placed in a 5th grade Resource classroom and taught Math, Reading and Language Arts. Her cooperating teacher was a relatively new teacher, and had graduated from the same preparation program Beth was completing. Beth was her second student teacher even though she had only two

years' teaching experience. Her cooperating teacher was highly regarded by the school and the university. There were a total of 21 special needs students who came to the room for resource support. Collectively, they were identified as having a learning disability, emotional disturbance, or both. The composition of students in Beth's class changed several times as different groups of students came to the room based on the subject area in which they needed extra help. There were 10 male students and 11 female students in the class. According to Beth, nine students were White, five were Hispanic, and seven were African American.

Blond-Haired, Blue-Eyed, White Girl. When the study began, Beth was 21 years old. She had identified herself as "White" in our initial interview. When I asked her why she characterized herself that way, she replied,

> I don't know how ***else*** to. Blond, blue-eyed, pale skin, kind of… gives me away…Yeah, I couldn't really tell you exactly where my family is from, long time ago… My grandmother told me a long time ago and I have already forgotten. It's really sad. I think my last name is German …I have no idea. My grandmother has done a genealogy on our family. I should go ask her, but I really don't know… It is so sad.

Although Beth did not identify any specific an ethnic group with which she was more comfortable, she did say that while she was growing up, "it was

White all the way. You know, because that's the only kids I ever saw, like my family and my elementary school, you know. I would have to say at least 90% you know, White, the whole district." Beth said she "didn't know any different" than the primarily White community that she had grown up in, although a nearby town had a large African American population. She identified the neighborhood she grew up in as suburban and mostly middle income. Her father worked as an accountant and her mother was a secretary.

In our talks, Beth mentioned several times that she thought the university she was attending was "very diverse, compared to where I come from, yes, it is very diverse." Her comparison was a relative one, considering that the undergraduate student enrollment statistics for the university is predominantly white (63% White, 3.5% African American, 14% Hispanic, and 15.8%Asian or Pacific Islander, according to the university's website). Beth felt that her "world view or worldly perspective is better now" that she had attended this university. She had discussed this with Victoria, one of the other participants in the study. She thought Victoria had "a [very] different life" because she had lived in several countries while she was growing up. Beth found Victoria interesting to talk to because she "brings a completely different perspective." For example, Victoria did not feel the university they were attending was a diverse campus.

> I guess when I say diverse…I am talking mostly about race and ethnicity. When she [Victoria] says diversity, she is talking more about perspectives…It's really funny, it's so different, her perspective. But it is still way better than what I had before. I am glad that I have got to see it.

Beth seemed to fail to realize that Victoria was referring to culture vs. ethnicity and that she was equating the two terms.

Well-Rounded Teachers Make Better Classrooms. Beth began college as a business major. She changed her major to education when she realized how unhappy she was as a business major. Beth also thought it was important for teachers to have their "own life" outside of school. She felt if a teacher were a "well-rounded person," they would "make a better classroom." It was important to be efficient with your time because "…if you have enough time to do the things you want to do, and outside your life, then I think your classroom life will be better."

As her experience in the classroom increased, she realized just how important it was to balance her life at school and at home. Right now, lesson planning took up much of her time. "This stuff is my life…when I get home from school, I still do school." She was looking forward to coming home from her new teaching job and not having to "do homework anymore."

In addition to using time efficiently, Beth thought it was important to plan activities that would interest and motivate her students. Her idea of a boring class would be one without any activities. To Beth, effective teaching meant students were stimulated and the teacher was not always at the overhead projector. She spent a great deal of time on teacher-made classroom materials or in designing centers and called herself a "perfectionist" who worked energetically to create high interest lessons for her students.

Beth's Diverse Field Experiences. Beth completed her 60-hour special education field placement for the special education instructional methods course at a relatively new elementary school that was primarily lower income. She enjoyed the "brand new campus" because everything was just three years old. Even though the campus had opened recently, several portable buildings were already being used as classrooms. Beth said the students she worked with were mostly African American and Hispanic, and that she could have probably counted the number of White students on one hand.

I asked Beth what she felt was challenging about working with children and she spoke about not knowing what else to try when all her previous efforts had failed. During her field experience for the special education instructional methods course, she was trying to help a particular student with his writing. She

felt she had reached a roadblock with him because she had tried everything she knew to try yet did not feel she was getting the progress that she had hoped for.

> …and that's the thing…I am learning at the same time. I don't know exactly all the kinds of different things to try, but like… this little kid, I was trying to get him to write. For one thing, getting him to talk to me was quite [an accomplishment]…but then getting him to write about something, it was really hard…He wouldn't, he would not write. He was very adamant… and I'd be like, you know, write something. So, I mean, I never passed that roadblock. I just didn't know what else to do.

Beth did eventually feel more successful with some of the students she worked with after her initial feeling that she was not going to be able to see much progress. "Watching them get something they didn't have when you first came in" was one of her most fulfilling memories of working with children with disabilities.

Her general education internship was completed at the same school where my participants were currently completing their student teaching. She was placed in a first grade classroom where she taught all subject areas. Beth thought there were more White students at this school compared to the school for her special education field placement. She said she appreciated being able to meet almost all

the parents of her first grade class because many of them attended a field trip the class took.

Beth's Diverse Class. As indicated earlier, the school where all four participants were placed for their student teaching was a diverse campus in terms of culture, language and social class. Beth felt it was valuable to get to "see both sides" referring to growing up in a predominately White community. She felt the campus "is very diverse…I mean, the school that I have been placed in, definitely diverse compared to what I am used to." Beth felt this gave her the opportunity to compare this school to the schools she had attended when she was younger and decide what she liked about how her former schools were structured, and what she thought was better for students. "It makes me want to go back there and fix it [the schools she attended while growing up] all up, because it [was] crummy." During our initial interview, I asked Beth to describe the classroom in which she was placed to complete her student teaching. She commented that she had not particularly noticed the ethnic makeup of the class. Her initial reaction was that there were more White students than she was expecting in a resource class.

> I guess I really haven't paid that much attention. Let's see, in my first class, okay, three African Americans, and then there is…you know…if you had asked me this four years ago, I would have been able to tell you like that. But now, I like…uhmmmm…this is hard.

This change seemed to be a result of her increased interaction with individuals from diverse backgrounds. She later identified 12 of the 21, or more than half, of the students as African American or Hispanic.

Even though she had only been in her class for seven or eight days, Beth felt she had already learned a great deal from her cooperating teacher. She felt she was a "good role model." Beth thought observing her cooperating teacher's organization would help her tremendously. Beth felt she needed to be more organized and thought it was helpful that her cooperating teacher was compulsive about organization and "everything has a place." "I considered myself to be pretty organized, and people think I am but I still feel disorganized all the time. This woman is the most organized person I have ever met." A piece of advice her cooperating teacher gave her was not to try and conquer the world the first year she taught. She said it was better "to concentrate on one thing a year" to do to the best of your ability.

Beth's Dream Job. Beth knew she wanted to stay in the area to teach after she graduated, but initially did not concern herself a great deal with her job search. Toward the end of the semester, a position became available in a general education first grade class at her current school. Beth had completed her general education internship in a first grade class at the same school, and for her, this was the "dream job." She had enjoyed working with the first grade team, and felt this

would be an ideal job because she already knew the teachers with whom she would be working. “It is exactly what I wanted.” Beth interviewed for the position and was offered the position later the same afternoon. She was also excited because her current cooperating teacher would be the new campus mentor, so she would be working with the cooperating teacher from her internship and be mentored by her current cooperating teacher. Although she had been planning to seek a special education resource position, Beth pointed out that this was the only general education position she would have considered. She felt that the support she would have on this campus would be a significant advantage; she had also worked with the K-2 special education teacher and was equally happy to be working with her again. During our talks, Beth mentioned wanting to become an administrator some day. Although she was not exactly sure when, she planned to begin graduate school sometime soon.

To sum up, Beth was a blond-haired, blue-eyed, White girl who began to have interaction with diverse cultures when she entered the university four years ago. She now had many friends, such as Victoria, from different ethnicities. Beth felt lucky to have obtained a teaching position in her current school where she felt she would have a great deal of support.

Victoria

When Victoria completed the section on the demographic profile that asked about her contact with diverse groups, she indicated that she had a great deal of contact with a variety of ethnic groups while growing up. Her contact with diverse groups was always positive. She attended international schools that had an ethnically mixed student body; there was "no majority" race. The international schools in Venezuela and Singapore were primarily staffed by Euro-Americans.

Victoria's student teaching placement was in an inclusive early childhood classroom that served 12 students (3 girls, 9 boys) ranging in age from three to five years. Eight in this group were identified as needing special education speech services. She identified one student as African-American, three as Mexican-American, six as Caucasian, and two as biracial. Her cooperating teacher had been teaching for nine years and was well known in the area; she provided staff development workshops for the regional education service center on early childhood topics and classroom organization. Two teaching assistants were also assigned to the room. Victoria's class was in the same portable building as Isabel's class, divided only by the restrooms in-between the two classrooms.

We Should All Be Proud of Our Heritage. Victoria was 23 years old at the time of the study. She indicated on the demographic profile completed at the beginning of the study that she was "fluent" in speaking and understanding

Spanish; she rated her skills in reading and writing Spanish as "intermediate." Both her parents were from Cuba and had immigrated to the United States when they were about 13 years old. They left Cuba "in such fear," but felt it was important that Victoria remembers her ancestral roots. Victoria described her mother as a "domestic goddess" although she worked with children as a volunteer and as a teacher for short periods of time. Her father was a businessman. Because of her father's business, her family moved occasionally to places around the world while Victoria was growing up. Victoria said she was not raised in the United States, having lived in Venezuela while she was in elementary and middle school and in Singapore while she was in high school. She reported growing up with mostly middle- to upper-income families in urban areas overseas. During these years, her circle of friends and the students at her school represented a variety of different ethnicities, although most of her teachers were Euro-American.

While we were talking about how she had identified her ethnicity on the demographic profile, Victoria and I had an interesting discussion about how people identify themselves. While she was listing the ethnicity of her students, Victoria asked how to spell "Caucasian" because she did not want to put "White." When I asked her why she felt that way, she said she was not sure, but she did not want to use that term.

> Well, I always thought it was so weird when I came to the States, because in Latin American you have Black, Indians, White, mixed, mulattos…those are all racial terms. But ethnicity is something completely different. When I came in the states they were like, 'No, you are not white; you are Hispanic.' I was like first of all, Hispanic, I hate calling people that, like when they ask where I am from, I never say Hispanic because it drives me crazy. Why not be proud of where you are from, say your country. No one says European. That is probably why I put Cuba, that and because I consider that my ethnicity, not a race.

If someone was from Bolivia, she wanted that person to say his or her parents were Bolivian, not South American. She also lived in Mexico City while she was growing up and felt that Mexicans were "such proud people." It also drove her crazy "when people say they aren't Mexican because they think it has negative connotations." Although she realized that it could have negative connotations in the United States, she felt "…it shouldn't be that way." We discussed how some people do not claim their heritage or learn their native language because others may make judgments based on a person's accent. Victoria felt that her parents were probably the other extreme because they felt everything was taken from them and it was necessary for the next generation to know and understand their family's history.

> I think because they had to leave their country in such a mess, every single time we would say prayers, you know, Catholic family, at the end of the night, my mom would say, (in Spanish first) 'We have to thank God every day for being Cuban.'

While her family traveled, they would say they were American because "…they are very proud to be American" but they would thank God everyday for "being born into a Cuban family.

I Love What I Am Doing. Victoria shared that she became interested in teaching because her mother was always working with children and had even worked as a teacher while she was growing up. Her mother was a bilingual teacher in a class that was a combination of second and third graders. She was frustrated at times because she felt that her students were "…tracked pretty much" and were not allowed to be integrated into monolingual English classes. This caused a "moral dilemma" for Victoria when it came to bilingual education.

> …I don't know how I feel about that. I mean…I think that Spanish should be taught and it should be a basic because I think the kids miss out on all of their basic phonics and phonetic awareness and everything if they don't have that. But at the same time, I think that just teaching it is not enough…

Victoria was concerned that the students in bilingual classes were "completely segregated" from the rest of the school and that oftentimes these students were all from low-income families. At the beginning of the semester, she felt strongly that she would "end up" teaching in a bilingual classroom because she was fluent in Spanish. However, she did not feel prepared to teach a bilingual class because she had not had any bilingual training. She did say that she did not "…think kids are pushed enough to learn English, at all."

Victoria was interested in becoming a special education teacher out of "my own personal interest" because she, herself, had a learning disability (LD). She found it interesting to work with students with learning disabilities and at one point, wanted to work with gifted students with LD. She became interested in working with students with more severe disabilities after working with a medically fragile child. This child had severe brain damage and after working with him, he learned his first sign used to communicate. She enjoyed working with special education students because "the small changes are so evident in special ed,…I think that's why I like special ed."

Victoria was looking forward to becoming a teacher; she said she really loved what she is doing. "…My mom loved what she did and she always did it because she wanted to…to this day she loves teaching." Victoria thought she was

patient and felt she was “very hard working.” Because she was just beginning her teaching career, she was “completely willing to try anything.”

Wide Array of School Experiences. Victoria was grateful to have completed her field experiences in a wide range of settings. She was placed in a general education first grade class at a higher income school in the area. Victoria characterized this school’s behavior management program as “idealistic” because there were no written rules around the class like she had been taught was important. “It was all planned and disciplined.” Later in the semester, I asked Victoria if she would like to work in a similar school and she replied that she would not want to. When I inquired to why she would not like to, she responded

> Isn’t that horrible? ‘Isabel’ and I had this conversation. Not my first year, because I am very hard on myself. I am very demanding of myself and as hard as it was at [the school], those parents were so demanding of me too, and they were not appreciative at all of what I was trying to do with their kids.

Victoria did say that the hardest part of being an intern is being in someone else’s classroom. “So I take that back, it is not necessarily that I wouldn’t enjoy that [working in a higher income school].” She said that she just had always wanted to work in “a more diverse low SES school, because you

know…you feel more rewarded…" She felt that she would just be "much more comfortable in a diverse setting than a setting like that."

Victoria also completed the required field experience for the special education instructional methods course in a variety of settings at a school that was in a lower income neighborhood. She worked in the self-contained unit for students with emotional disturbance (ED), a resource class, and a bilingual resource class. She described this school as almost completely opposite from the school in the affluent neighborhood. She described the behavior management program as being reactive to student behaviors instead of preventing misbehaviors because "…it was all like, after the kids misbehaved." She described the teacher in the ED unit as a "great" teacher. However, Victoria was concerned because

> …she is well known for [being a] behavior management specialist, but the kids did not learn. There was no focus on education. It was all just on behavior modification…and this child was lacking. My fifth grader was reading at a pre-primer and she was not doing anything academic.

While working at this school, she also worked with a bilingual resource teacher who she felt was also "wonderful." Victoria described another moral dilemma concerning a student she was working with on reading. The student was bilingual and had not been identified as having a disability. Because Victoria had

a special education background, the teacher asked her whether or not she felt that this student could have a learning disability.

> I knew he wasn't LD. I mean from personal experience and I have done enough assessments. He just missed out on the basics. Like, I mean he didn't know…letter/sound correspondence….in English and Spanish…that is like basic stuff. But I still…I mean I just adore this child, and I so wanted to tell her that he like is, because maybe…not that they wouldn't notice when they test him, but maybe they would just be more apt to provide better services for him.

Victoria's Learning Experience. Victoria believed that her current placement was also a learning experience for her. She enjoyed working with her cooperating teacher and the teaching assistants in the room. Her cooperating teacher worked closely with the teacher in Isabel's classroom, modeling collaborative behavior. Thus, Victoria was able to see the benefits of teamwork.

Her initial impression of her class was that they were "so small." Victoria grew to love the twelve students in her class very quickly. The diverse class was made up of one African-American student, six Caucasian students, three Mexican-American students and two biracial students. Victoria felt strongly about accurately identifying her students. She described the two biracial students as being Mexican-American/German and the other as African-American/Caucasian.

There was one student, Cory, who Victoria described the following way: "his IQ is low, but we don't know how low." He was almost totally non-verbal. "All the issues, in my opinion are all behavioral. All of it is behavioral." At the beginning of the semester, her cooperating teacher helped out a great deal with Cory, often removing him from the group to work independently with her. As the semester progressed, Cory surprised her when he began to use language spontaneously. He once told the cooperating teacher "I don't want to" when he was allowed to go with her to the office to take the lunch order for the day. Although his behavior had been challenging at the beginning of the semester, "…it didn't last very long." Victoria soon felt that she was able to manage his behavior without direct intervention by her cooperating teacher.

When asked about her favorite part of the semester, she said she enjoyed having total responsibility. Although she described the experience as "just wonderful," the anticipation of the two weeks of "total teach" had been very stressful. On her first day of full responsibility, she was disappointed to realize that she had misspelled a word on the "morning book" she had created to be used for one of her activities during group time. She quickly improvised and provided other choices of activities for the class, noting that the class did not even notice that there was not a morning book that day. Victoria thoroughly enjoyed the time she was fully responsible for the class. "It was a blast."

In her mind, a contributing factor to her comfort level in the class was because her cooperating teacher "…had a great classroom set up." Victoria valued the rapport she had established with all her students by being "…consistent, fair, caring." She felt they responded "with mutual respect."

One policy Victoria said she would change when she had her own classroom was the open door policy practiced by her cooperating teacher. Because of a negative experience during one of her previous field experiences when a parent came to visit unexpectedly, Victoria was hesitant to have parents visit the class without having made prior arrangements. Victoria also felt that her cooperating teacher held many "traditional values." One example was that her cooperating teacher would only address messages written in the student's journal that went home daily with each student to "mom." Victoria felt that she should "acknowledge that all families were not just a mom and a dad." She felt there many types of families that were never referred to by her cooperating teacher. The most helpful skill her cooperating teacher helped her with was becoming organized, which she acknowledged was difficult for her.

Victoria's New Job. Victoria had been adamant earlier in the semester that she did not feel prepared to work in a bilingual setting because she had not received any formal bilingual training. Yet, because she was hoping to find a position in the area, she interviewed for special education vacancies including

bilingual early childhood positions. Early in the semester, she had already received two job offers in bilingual early childhood classrooms and one offer in a life-skills class. After the interview for a bilingual early childhood position in a nearby school, she was surprised at herself for actually considering the position. In her mind, a major benefit to working in the area would be that she would be close to her and Isabel's cooperating teachers. She had thought that "bilingual EC is just monolingual Spanish" and she was much more comfortable in English than in Spanish. After visiting the classrooms at the schools at which there was a vacancy, she liked the nearby school the best. Victoria was also impressed by the teaching assistant who had been with the class for seven years and "has had teachers come and go…." The teaching assistant had even offered to meet with her whenever she wanted to during the summer to plan for the following year. Victoria was excited enough about the possible new position that she asked and found out that the Board-Maker that made the picture symbols in English could also make the symbols with Spanish words. She was already thinking about how she could use the song that she had used this semester for remembering the class' behavior expectations.

> I can sing the exact same song with the Spanish and English words…and you just use the exact same pictures except for now there is a Spanish word and an English word and I mean, I would hope that after they are

> comfortable singing it in Spanish, then we could sing it in Spanish and sing it in English…

While she was concerned that parents would worry if she did not know how to say everything in Spanish, she and the teaching assistant also discussed how most parents just "…want their kids to learn," so using English in the classroom has not been an issue in the past. Another appealing feature of this position for Victoria was the low student enrollment anticipated for the following year, which, with a teaching assistant in the room, would allow for opportunities for inclusion with the other bilingual classes. The teaching assistant was very receptive to Victoria's ideas when she discussed wanting the children to be included in a regular bilingual class as much as possible, and wanting to eat breakfast in the classroom because she had "seen the language development of my kids, especially three-year olds that still need help with appropriate eating and table manners and asking for things…you know, WH questions…" Victoria was even more excited because "it seemed like we were really on the same page." She was looking forward to the large classroom her class would be in. As a teacher of three-, four- and five-year olds, having restrooms in the classroom was also a nice amenity.

> It's a really nice classroom, I was just looking around, you know, I get that excited feeling like, my classroom, you know and I'd put the big circle

over here and I would put this center you know over here, and this center over here. I am so excited.

Finally, although initially apprehensive, Victoria was looking forward to working with young children with disabilities and facilitating their acquisition of English as a second language. She felt fortunate to have had field experiences in both a higher income school and a low-income school. Feeling she would be more comfortable in a diverse setting, Victoria decided to accept a position in a bilingual early childhood class for students with disabilities.

The four participants were in their early 20's at the time of the study. Three of the four were Euro-American and had limited contact with diverse groups before beginning college. Victoria, who was Cuban-American, had lived in several places around the world, exposing her to many diverse cultures. Their personal histories affected their level of cultural awareness and the impact the teacher preparation program was able to make in preparing them to work with CLD students with disabilities.

Common Themes

While all four participants were unique in many aspects, there were also some commonalities in their way of thinking about many issues we discussed throughout the semester. The themes presented represent the ideas and beliefs that recurred in both the interviews and the informal conversations. The issues

involved in the discussion of the implications of culture and language are astonishingly complex. The similarities, or themes, are discussed below.

Hazy Understanding of Culture and Its Influence on Teaching-Learning

Three of the four participants had taken the elective course that dealt specifically with CLD students with disabilities. These three, Michelle, Beth and Victoria, were somewhat more familiar with the concept of culture and its implications on behavior; however, Michelle and Beth's level of understanding continued to be superficial as was demonstrated by their ability to discuss related issues. Victoria, who had been raised in different places around the world, had a more developed understanding of culture and its implications on behavior. Isabel, who was the only participant who had not taken the elective course that specifically addressed CLD students with disabilities, also appeared to have a limited understanding of culture and its influence on teaching and learning.

Limited Definitions of Culture. When asked to define culture in their own words, there was a wide range of definitions for culture given. Three of the participants provided definitions of culture that appeared to be the politically correct response or one they may have felt I was expecting. Through continued discussions of culture and their perceived influence of culture, the descriptors given by the participants for culture evolved. There were also changes or modifications made during both formal and informal member checking. Although

the definitions provided were more explicit and detailed, they continued to be disjointed.

In our initial interview, it was apparent that Isabel had never considered how she would define culture. Isabel was the one participant who had not taken the class that dealt specifically with CLD students with disabilities. After she defined culture as "…probably um different groups coming together and sharing their own beliefs and ideas in one effort, I guess...," she joked that she should have prepared herself. She did describe her personal culture as the way she grew up. She also said she was sure that culture affected behavior. When asked how, she began discussing how exasperating it was for her that she did not speak Spanish especially since many of the parents of her students have been mostly monolingual Spanish-speakers. "…It is kind of frustrating for me that I am not able to talk to them. I have to go through someone else. I would like to be able to talk to them one on one…" From her response in our initial interview, it seemed that, to Isabel, language and culture were the same.

During our final interview, I asked Isabel if she wanted to add anything to the definition she had given for culture in our first interview. "Uh, no, culture to me is just diversity. That is what it means, diversity." When I asked her what type of diversity was she referring to, she responded,

> Diverse, well in beliefs, and family, ideas, the whole spectrum, not necessarily a race, you know. Children with two parents that are a man or a woman, it is just completely different. There are a lot of different kinds of families.

Isabel reiterated that language was a crucial element of culture and that she regretted not being able to communicate better with the parents of her students.

> Language is a major part of culture,…because I mean each person's, …every culture had a different language, you know, depending, even where you grow up. Even if you are in East U.S. or West U.S., you speak different… In Colorado, we said 'guys,' here it's 'ya'll.' It's just the whole way you speak it.

Michelle agreed that language was an integral part of culture. Her first thought was that culture was language, but that even in the "American" culture, there were so many different languages spoken, "like English, Spanish, Chinese." Michelle described culture as having to do with language, music, food, religion, or the way you dress in her initial interview. As she continued to talk about culture, she began to elaborate. "Just about everything you do can reflect your culture." When member checking with Michelle, she changed her definition of culture to

> A way of life, it includes shared interest of a community or a group of people. They often have the same language, religion, music, values, etc. I believe that a person can identify with multiple cultures but feel stronger ties to a specific one….

She did continue, however, to describe observable facets of culture, similar to the view of culture that Hollins (1996) refers to as artifact and behavior.

In our initial interview, Beth could not define culture at first. Since she had also taken the course that dealt specifically with cultural and linguistically diverse students with disabilities, I asked if she had had to think about culture in that class.

> Well, that was a long time ago…and that was when it meant only one, one or two different things probably. It was like simpler. I had a much simpler mind, I guess. I don't know…just the beliefs…culture to me, is my family and my church and my beliefs as a person and as a teacher. I don't know, just everything about who a person is and what makes them who they are.

In our first interview, Beth mentioned that she was also concerned that she would have had students write about what they got for Christmas when they returned from the holiday break, because that was something that she had been asked to do when she was in school. After having taken that course, she now realized that assignment would be inappropriate for many students. "Not

everybody is Christian," so they may not celebrate Christmas or Easter. In our final interview, I gave Beth the definition she had provided for culture in our first interview and asked her if she wanted to add or change anything. "I kind of like that answer…That's pretty good" was her response, demonstrating a limited understanding of culture similar to Isabel and Michelle.

Victoria was the last participant to be interviewed at the beginning of the semester. As a result, she and Isabel had discussed the questions I asked Isabel in our interview. When I asked Victoria how she would define "culture," she joked that she meant to think about that question. She then went on to provide the following definition:

> Culture is just the beliefs and values and traditions, I think, of a place…and not necessarily of a place, but of a group of people. It doesn't really have to be in a country. It involves food and dance and language and music and it all just revolves around tradition…

At our final interview, I read Victoria the definition she provided for culture at our initial interview and asked her if she would like to add or change anything. Although she did comment that her definition was "very scattered," she said she "would stick with that, culture is the beliefs and values and traditions of people." She also commented that culture "has an extremely strong influence on someone's behavior." When I questioned her about this, she responded with:

> What actions we consider appropriate and inappropriate, how they view you as a teacher. I am talking within the classroom, how they view the teacher, how they view their relationship with their peers, how they view themselves, what their place is in the classroom…

Throughout our discussions, it was apparent that, of the four participants, Victoria had a much deeper understanding of culture and its influences on behavior.

Hazy Awareness of Cultural Influence. Three of the four participants stated they understood that culture had an impact, at times, a significant impact, on one's behavior; they were, however, unable to illustrate that understanding. The participants often referred to observable indicators of culture, such as dress, as examples of cultural influence.

Isabel clearly stated that her culture affected her behavior. When I asked for an example, she mentioned that her cooperating teacher did not acknowledge Easter because it did not go with the theme for the week. If Isabel had been in charge of the class, she would have acknowledged the holiday, but not necessarily in a religious sense. A second example of how her culture influenced her occurred when Isabel presented a unit based on farms. Isabel said she was more comfortable and had an easier time with this unit having grown up in a rural community; she was able to share a great deal of personal experience with the class.

> So when we got to the farm unit and everything, I was real into it and I was able to talk and explain things that the kids really didn't understand or have never explored, so that was kind of neat.

As the semester progressed, Isabel did go on to expand her explanation of culture. She felt it was how you are raised, or the way you are taught. The environment in which someone grows up impacts how someone will act. For example,

> If you have a parent that works three jobs and the child comes home by itself for four hours and has to make himself his own dinner, that is going to affect him differently than a child whose mother stays home twenty-four hours a day, is there when he gets home, has food on the table. It is a completely different environment.

Near the middle of the semester, I asked Isabel if she thought any of her students' cultural background affected how they were doing in class. Her response was that she did not think that a student's cultural background was an issue because they were all doing well even though they were from different cultures. Her response implied that students' cultures were not addressed in class. In our final interview, when I asked how she felt culture affected any of her students, Isabel gave the example of a student who had been in an unstructured daycare.

She said this student had been a wild child when she first came, but now the only trouble she has had here is sharing.

Isabel thought her cooperating teacher's culture may have affected her vocabulary. Her cooperating teacher made a point to choose challenging vocabulary for the students in her class.

> Some of her vocabulary that she talks with the children about describing things… Well she treats them – she's real good. She uses high vocabulary for them. Some parents don't use with their children at that age. So I think that's neat… talking about dinosaurs and paleontologists and you know…

Isabel remained uncertain of how her culture affected her behavior or how others' behavior was affected by their culture. She did know that her experiences have made her who she is and also realized how different her experience has been from that of some of her students.

Michelle and I discussed how her culture affected her teaching or her interactions with her students. Michelle said she based her teaching on her own personal experience, so she felt her culture greatly affects how she teaches. She went on to say,

> There are times when I might not feel as comfortable teaching certain concepts because other cultures have had more experience with the concept. It is hard for me to pinpoint exact times because it is very

ingrained in my teaching. It is so important that I start to always examine how it affects my teaching.

A music lesson was the example Michelle gave about how her culture affected the way she taught in the classroom. She did not have a lot of music in her home while she was growing up, so she found the required music unit challenging. She depended on the teaching assistant a great deal to help with ideas of how to incorporate music into her lessons. The teaching assistant led songs often and Michelle was aware of how much the students loved singing. So using music in her classroom was something she really wanted to learn more about.

When I asked Michelle whether or not she felt culture had an effect on a student's behavior, she responded,

> Yeah, I think it can, I think, how you are raised, has to do a lot with your culture, or your own family's beliefs, I think that can affect behavior a lot. This includes how kids behave at school and how they might interact with the teacher.

The example she gave for how a student's culture affected him or her was Tina, who was only allowed to wear skirts and dresses because of her religion. This issue had been discussed in Tina's ARD meeting because the physical education teacher felt strongly that she needed to wear shorts. Tina's mother confirmed that it was against their religion for girls to wear shorts.

Initially, Michelle was not able to identify any cultural determinants of her cooperating teacher's or the teaching assistant's behavior. She recognized that many of their actions were influenced by their culture, "but it's hard for me to just, just like pinpoint an exact thing." When given her final summary to member check, Michelle added two examples of how she felt culture influenced their behavior. The teaching assistant grew up in the Midwest and often referred to cokes as "pop". In class, the teaching assistant would ask a certain student if she wanted a "pop" and the student would not know how to respond. If she asked her if she wanted a coke, the student would say "yes." Michelle noted on the summary that this was an example of how language was different for those who grow up in different areas of the country. Michelle also added that both her cooperating teacher and the teaching assistant had grown up without computers. They described themselves as "computer illiterate" and not being familiar with computers "can affect using computers as a teaching tool."

Beth also acknowledged that her culture had a strong impact on her. She felt that her culture influenced some of the phrases she used in class. One of the phrases her mother would say when she was younger when she was bickering with her sister was "Do you want me to separate you two?" Beth wanted to say this phrase in her class when two students were having trouble working together. Beth did elaborate on how she felt culture affected someone's behavior. "Well

you are, …I am a product of my culture and my behaviors reflect that because…I act the way my parents taught me to act and that is part of our culture as a family or whatever." Beth also thought the fact that she had grown up in a small town had an impact on her. She was taught by her parents to have respect for her elders. "When I was a kid… I was very respectful to my elders, Ma'am and Sir." Although she knew that she had been taught that way, she not seem to realize that it also affected what she expected from others as was seen in the following comment: "I feel myself having a real hard time with kids who don't have, don't respect me as a teacher, and it irks me to no end and I don't have very much tolerance for it."

We also discussed Beth belief that a student's culture affected how they behaved. She gave the example of a student, Jim, an African-American student whose mother was very religious and went to church quite often. Beth said Jim was always good at church but that he

> …cusses like a sailor on the playground. He goes crazy at school because he is so tied down at home. I really think that is why…and he is on like a behavior chart, he is getting real close to being put in an ED unit, his behavior is that crazy.

In one of our later debriefing sessions, Beth revealed that Jim qualified for special education services as a student with emotional disturbance. When I asked about

how a student's culture affected their behavior, Beth said she didn't even realize that "the first four kids that popped into my head were all African-American." Jim was African American, as was Billy, who was also identified as a student with emotional disturbance. Beth described Billy as a student who was loud, and who could do well in a small class, but spent most of his day in the self-contained ED classroom. She also mentioned that he had frequent outbursts and had to be restrained twice in one week.

Another student that Beth discussed when we were talking about how a student's culture could impact their behavior was Belinda, who was also African-American. Belinda's mother "screams at the bus driver everyday, curses the bus driver out." Belinda had been banned from riding public transportation because she was "beating up kids on the bus." Because she was missing so many days of school when she was no longer allowed to ride the public bus, the school "pulled some strings and got her to be able to ride the special ed. bus..." Belinda was never ready when the bus arrived to pick her up so the bus driver would honk every morning for her to come outside.

> So the mother comes out screaming her head off, cursing at the driver, 'my daughter is going to come out when she is good and ready.' Saying the F-word all over the place. This happened everyday for a week. The bus

driver is like, 'I don't have to deal with this…verbal harassment.' So, anyway, it is just like, we wonder why this girl has problems.

When Beth shared the story about Belinda, I asked if she could think of anyone else. She said she "could think of a million." When I asked her about how she had mentioned earlier that the students that came to mind were all African American, she said, "Yea, that kind of makes me feel bad." She added that it had nothing to do with ethnicity or cultural differences; it was just their home life. "Some students are just ED."

Victoria's understanding of the influence of culture was in strong contrast to the other three participants. She felt that a person's culture had a great impact on a person's behavior, and when asked, gave the example of a student in her general education first grade class who had recently come to the United States from Korea. The boy would not stay in his seat and did not want to keep his shoes on, which the teacher felt were problems. Not wanting to have his shoes on inside was understandable to Victoria because "they leave their shoes at the door." She identified this practice as a "cultural thing" that the child could have easily adjusted to if the teacher had just let him 'go off and read on the floor or take off his shoes if he wanted to." Victoria felt that a small adjustment could have helped this student feel more comfortable and welcome in the class.

Victoria discussed another student during one of our debriefing sessions who she felt was influenced by his culture. Joe was Mexican-American and was the youngest in a large family. A daily routine in the room was to have breakfast in the classroom and then clean up to begin the next activity. Eating breakfast in the classroom provided many opportunities to build language in a natural context and to work with students on appropriate behaviors. Victoria noticed that Joe was slow to take his bowl to the trash when asked to do so. She thought that cleaning up after himself was probably not expected of him at home. Victoria had observed Joe hold the door open for his mother when she dropped him off in the morning "because that's what a gentleman is supposed to do." So she thought that Joe might also think that boys should not have to clean up after themselves because that was something that the female family members usually did in his home. This was a conclusion she came to being somewhat familiar with some of the expectations of males in his home. Again, Victoria was able to provide examples that demonstrated her understanding for the influence culture has on one's behavior.

Case in Point: Tricia's Overlooked Needs. Many CLD students are not doing well in school because their cultural, social, and/or linguistic characteristics are not recognized, or are devalued or misunderstood (Kea & Utley, 1998). This seemed to be the case for "Tricia", a student in Isabel's class whom we discussed

often. Tricia qualified for special education services as “speech delayed” and her mother was a monolingual Spanish speaker. Isabel told me that Tricia did not speak Spanish at school; however, when I asked, the teaching assistant in the room said the child understood Spanish because she often spoke to her in Spanish. One day, Isabel mentioned that she was working with her cooperating teacher on revising Tricia’s goals for her upcoming ARD and told me that all her speech goals were in English. I asked if the girl had been tested in both Spanish and English and Isabel replied that she was sure testing had been done in both languages. This was an indication that Isabel understood the importance of assessing a child in both languages when there was a language other than English spoken in the home.

Tricia went through an adjustment period when she first arrived in the class because she had not been in a structured care situation before; but as the weeks passed, her behavior began to improve, especially during group activities. However, near the end of the semester, her behavior began to deteriorate in unstructured activities like center time. Tricia did not share well with peers and became increasingly aggressive; she even started biting. Isabel commented that she would need a behavior intervention plan, BIP, soon.

I asked Isabel if she thought Tricia would do better if some of her instruction were in Spanish. She thought Tricia would only be confused because

the teachers and teaching assistants had only spoken to her in English since she began school. The assessments typically given to students, such as the *Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills-Revised*, were also administered only in English. As the semester was ending, Isabel told me the student would now probably qualify as having a Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD). Throughout our discussions about Tricia, there was never any mention of her language proficiency in either her first language, Spanish, or in English, nor did Isabel seem to demonstrate any awareness of the importance of considering language patterns or proficiency for a child from a Spanish-speaking home when planning instruction for Tricia.

Victoria also spent time with Tricia. One day, when Tricia's mother came to pick her up, Victoria asked about her daughter speaking Spanish at home. Her mother said her father spoke Spanish, but that Tricia did not. Victoria was also able to attend Tricia's Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) meeting. She had spoken with the speech therapist that had just completed a speech therapy session with Tricia and another student, Cody. The speech therapist reported that Cody was very congested and had a very runny nose. Tricia had pointed at Cody and told him, "*Mocos* [snot] you have to clean them off." The speech therapist did not understand what Tricia was saying and asked her several times what she was talking about. Tricia kept pointing to Cody's nose and repeating "*Mocos, mocos*."

Tricia's use of Spanish confirmed to Victoria that she did have some Spanish language skills. Because she knew that the speech therapist who had evaluated Tricia was monolingual, she realized that the assessment had been conducted in English only. Yet, this realization did not appear to problematize the assessment for Victoria. We also talked about other topics that were discussed at Tricia's ARD. Victoria discussed what Tricia's goals were for the following year. Her goals were to improve her social skills because Tricia did not interact well with other students. She did not have conversations with other children and would frequently push other students. Even though Victoria seemed to have a better understanding of the influence of culture and language and had been seriously considering taking a teaching position in a bilingual early childhood classroom for students with disabilities, she did not question the identification of Tricia as a student with a speech delay or discuss any language considerations for Tricia's IEP. To me, Tricia exemplified the experiences of students who struggle because their cultural and linguistic needs are not being met.

Attributes of Effective Teachers of CLD Students with Disabilities

I was interested in exploring my participants' views about what a teacher of CLD students with disabilities would need to know to be effective in the classroom. When I spoke to the participants about their views about teachers who are successful working with CLD students with disabilities, I heard a variety of

descriptors ranging from "caring," "willing to forgive," to just "know your students" as well as what the participants felt influences how successful a student will be in school.

Knowledge and Skills Needed for Successful Teachers. Holidays celebrated by CLD families and the religious background of students were cited as essential information for a teacher to have about the students in her class. A student's family situation and their language were also specified as significant to have information about. Beth said effective teachers also have "knowledge of their students, personally and individually." Beth and I also discussed what a teacher would need to do to be an effective teacher. Beth thought it was important to "know your students." When I asked about what a teacher should know about your students, she replied, "everything." After being prompted for more information, she said a teacher should know their students "inside and out." She went on to say that teachers

> …need to know their levels, you know, what they are good at, what they are not good at, what they don't like, what they do like, math and language arts, and home, know everything, just know your kids.

Victoria felt all students should be successful and it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that this is possible. She acknowledged "every child learns best in one way" and that it was up to the teacher to find that way.

According to Victoria, “all students are different.” Effective teachers of CLD students with disabilities would be “…well-planned, good at instruction, good at planning and instruction and breaking down, like in scaffolding and lesson planning kind of stuff.”

Knowing the holidays celebrated by her students is going to be one thing Michelle wants to find out about all her students “because I don't ever want to be leaving out a holiday they celebrate or I don't want to make a big deal out of Christmas if my kids don't celebrate Christmas.” Michelle and Isabel felt it was important to know about the students’ religious background. Isabel thought it was important because “not every child celebrates Christmas.”

The family situations are also important pieces of information for teachers to have. During her general education internship, Michelle had an experience that demonstrated to her the importance of getting to know your student’s situation.

> We were writing letters to family members such as grandma, that was the lesson and this one little boy was writing a letter to his dad. And I said, ‘Oh, where does your dad live?’ The boy answered, ‘He's in jail’ and it just hit me like, Wow! He might not feel comfortable saying that in front of other kids. He didn't seem like he had a problem with it, but it was something I was totally not aware of and it hit me like, oh no. He was in

third grade. I think the other kids knew…I realized there is so much I don't know about these kids' background or their family life.

Her current cooperating teacher shared information with Michelle that she thought it was necessary for her to know to help the students in her class that were in special family arrangements. Michelle knew if she were talking with "Tim", she would refer to his grandmother instead of his mom; "Michael" was not able to see his dad because of legal issues, so she was cautious not to mention his father, so she would not upset him.

Good communication with parents is also important for effective teachers according to Michelle and Isabel. To Isabel, the most important skill needed to be an effective teacher of CLD students is getting to know your students. Teachers need to know their parents, their family situation, what's important to them, and what they want to learn about. Beth thought teachers get to know their students by talking to them, although she acknowledged, "there is no way that is going to fit in my schedule though." Beth did say during the first few weeks of school when teachers are usually testing their students and getting to know their levels, there may be opportunities to work one on one. One day a student, Amy said, "Yeah, I don't have a daddy." Beth felt Amy was trying to get her to ask more questions, but she was not able to because "…we are right in the middle of class. I have to

always ask those questions but didn't know exactly what to ask, I don't know, I am still learning how to do that without intruding…"

According to Beth and Victoria, effective teachers of CLD students with disabilities should have strong behavior management skills. Michelle also thought teachers have to be knowledgeable of different languages to be successful with diverse students and regretted not learning another language.

Other Characteristics of Successful Teachers. When asked to describe successful teachers of CLD students, the participants responded with a lengthy list of personality traits. To be able to work well with CLD students with disabilities, Michelle thought it was important to be positive and to care for children. "I definitely think just loving children, should be, number one. I think you really have to have the best interest of the students in mind, and I think you should really just love children." If a teacher did not have that love or desire to see children reach their potential, she did not feel that person should be in teaching.

Michelle believed that patience was the most important attribute a teacher needs to be effective. She said those who know her would describe her as patient, and believed that a teacher must be very patient, especially with students in a life skills class because it will take longer for some of them to learn. Victoria also mentioned patience as being important to have.

To Isabel, an effective teacher of CLD students with disabilities is respectful, compassionate, works to understand their students, and is able to able to relate with them. It is important for teachers to "be approachable." If a teacher is approachable, students will feel comfortable coming to the teacher if they have a problem and will be able to do better in school. She also felt an effective teacher of CLD students with disabilities makes sure all students are involved in the lesson or activity. A good teacher also has to be open to new ideas because you never know when 'teachable moments' will come up during the day. Structure is important in a classroom, but teachers should not be like, "Oh, my God, we are 30 seconds over. We are supposed to be starting something else. Stop what you are doing." Effective teachers are open to change and willing to change when new ideas are presented. Students should also be allowed to be involved. Teachers should "let the kids express their thinking and what they want to learn…where their little minds go if it is not completely off track."

To Isabel, an effective teacher should be patient, open and flexible, and understand that some culture's beliefs may be different from your own. It will be important to find out what would be offensive by getting to know the families. When I asked how she would get to know the families of her students, she replied,

> Well getting to know the families and also doing research on this type of community or cultures. You know I mean in some cultures, you know to

> do this (motioning for someone to come with your hand), you know, or like to do this is bad, and you know for us it is "come here" and for other cultures it is calling something…I mean you gotta know, …does that make sense?…You have to do research.

Isabel thought she would get to know her students by talking to them, making home visits, and communicating with her students' families on a daily basis. She thought that for teachers to be able to plan for instruction, they needed to know the special needs of their students, what they can and can't do, so you can build on it when planning instruction.

Michelle felt being flexible and "very open to things" and "willing to accept other people" were also important qualities of a successful teacher of CLD exceptional students. She also felt being strong willed and consistent in everything that you do is also important for a teacher to be effective. Michelle has always wanted to be with children, but feels that it is important to respect them and to not treat them like babies; they should be treated as she would have wanted to be treated at that age.

Victoria felt effective teachers of CLD students with disabilities would be giving, caring, and "extremely forgiving to themselves and to the students." These teachers would also be willing to change and try new ideas; if an idea did not

work, they would be willing to keep trying until they found something that was successful.

There were some things Michelle said she knew she never wanted to do. She never wanted to offend a student in any kind of way or not be sensitive to them; she also did not want any student to feel left out. “Being sensitive and not knowing all about their culture and what is going on with them. So, that’s just one thing, I am just really scared of not doing everything I should do…”

Influences on CLD Students’ Success at School. The participants also discussed other influences on a student’s performance at school. A child’s home environment was noted as important by Michelle and Isabel. “The support that they get at home is important” according to Michelle. Isabel felt,

> There is the environment, how they are feeling, whether they eat breakfast. I mean all the physical, mental, I mean if something is happening in their family, or a fight with a peer. There are so many factors. Heat, lighting. I mean, you go with…all these. There are a ton of things that could affect a child.

Beth thought it was important to have good listening skills, although she hoped it was not the only thing students needed to do to be successful. Beth also thought confidence and determination were important characteristics of successful students, so it was important for teachers to try and create a classroom

environment where students were successful so they would feel confident in their abilities.

> Confidence is a huge thing…yeah, I mean, I think that is the root, of like more problems. I don't know, like because I noticed the kids think they are just being bad. That is what they do to get out of something…doing something that they are not good at, you know, and if they had the confidence to push through it, and you know…it would be a lot better. You do see those children in the classroom, who accomplish things because they do have confidence.

Isabel thought students should be open to and able to share ideas with others "without being egocentric." They should be "able to work with other people" and respect the differences in others. Isabel also thought good listening skills will also help students do well in school. Michelle said it was "essential that a teacher create an environment where students feel comfortable making mistakes and learning new things. This helps a child do well in school."

Isabel cited motivation as important for a student to do well in school. Victoria also felt it was important that a student is hardworking and tries his or her best in school. Those that are flexible or can "deal with change" would also have an easier time in school according to Victoria.

Participants' Perceptions of their Readiness to Serve CLD Students with Disabilities

In general, my study focused on how prepared these student teachers felt to work with students from diverse backgrounds, so this was a topic we spoke of frequently over the semester. While most new teachers are nervous about the idea of having complete responsibility of a class, these student teachers had relatively few concerns. Their comfort level was then reinforced by the especially high evaluations all participants received from both their cooperating teacher and university supervisor. Although the overall agreement was that the participants felt prepared to work with CLD students and their families, Beth did express a concern.

> I'm ready to start working with parents because I think that is going to be a whole 'nuther' ball game. I am afraid of them looking at a blonde hair, blue eyed, white girl – young, making assumptions about me too. I am afraid of that. I am afraid of not knowing exactly how to deal with things and being, I don't know, I am young and I think I am going to be a lot younger than most of their parents, probably, hopefully.

Influence of the Cooperating Teacher and University Supervisor. Another sub-theme that was seen across the four participants was the high regard they felt for all of the cooperating teachers they had been placed with during their

field placements. While there were concerns about the professionalism of a supervisor some of the participants had the previous semester, all were very pleased with their current university supervisor as well as their cooperating teacher.

Beth began the semester confident in her teaching abilities. Beth attributed her confidence to the teachers she had been placed with during her field experiences. “I was thinking…I have been so fortunate to get such good teachers as role models every semester. This had everything to do with why I feel confident.” Beth felt that she could conduct an ARD meeting “without any problem” after observing her cooperating teacher in just two ARD meetings.

Beth also spoke highly of her university supervisor. She described her as helpful, complimentary, and “on top of everything and kept it all together.” I asked Beth if the thought her university supervisor addressed cultural diversity in any of their discussions or in any of her written feedback.

> Not too much, I think she may have,…well I remember one of the first lessons I taught I didn't say much to Darrell, I would go over there and see how he was doing, but…he didn't say much, he didn't ask questions, I didn’t see anything wrong with the problems he was working on and the work he had done, and she pointed that out. And I knew she, I was waiting for her to make the African-American comment but she didn't, but it was

more making sure that I make it around to all the kids, not necessarily, cultural diversity.

Beth was concerned that, when it was bought to her attention that she was not giving a student enough attention, it would be assumed that it was for a specific reason. She knew she would give the students who were misbehaving more attention and wanted to work on giving attention to all the students in the class, not just the "bad kids."

Isabel also had very positive experiences with her cooperating teachers and university supervisors for almost all of her field placements. Isabel described her current university supervisor as "very objective… very constructive criticism, very positive, you know, gave me good ideas on how to modify some of my situations that really were good so I think she was a great supervisor."

Isabel felt her experience in a 2nd grade bilingual classroom had been "ideal." She described her cooperating teacher as "amazing." Isabel was equally pleased with her current cooperating teacher describing the classroom as a great placement. She described her as caring, flexible and "good at modifying" and loved the way her cooperating teacher had set up her classroom. There was a "set routine" and the students knew exactly what was expected. She admired her cooperating teacher's ability to be strict without being overbearing. Isabel felt her cooperating teacher was experienced and that she was learning a great deal from

her. She was also benefiting from working closely with Victoria's cooperating teacher.

Michelle had only high praise for her current cooperating teacher and university supervisor. She also thought the cooperating teacher during her internship was "great." Michelle described her cooperating teacher for her student teaching as "awesome." Both she and the teaching assistant were extremely supportive of her and helped her feel comfortable with the students in the class. "…I'm just very grateful. I mean her and [the teaching assistant], all were just incredible, I've learned so much…" One skill her cooperating teacher encouraged her to work on was her classroom management. Her cooperating teacher "encouraged me to be better disciplined, I mean you know, to be stronger in my discipline." This was an area of weakness that Michelle noted on her mid-term self-evaluation, so I asked her if she felt she had improved.

> I think I have. I'm still not always as consistent as I should be, but I know that's really important. But every time I'd, say, put a kid in time out or discipline the kids, she'd be like 'yeah, good for you, that's good', so she's been great. I've been very blessed that I've been able to work with her.

Michelle thought the structure of her cooperating teacher's classroom would help her the most in preparing for her own classroom. Her classroom management and daily schedule were clear so students knew the daily routine and

understood the expectations for behavior. She felt the daily routine, which had been in place since the beginning of the year, was very important to the students in a life skills class. I also asked Michelle if there was anything she would have done differently from the way it was done by her cooperating teacher. Michelle said she was just "taking it all in"; there was not anything she would have done differently.

Michelle's experience with her university supervisor during student teaching was a complete contrast to her experience with her university supervisor as an intern. Michelle shared in our first interview that her university supervisor during her internship field placement was not professional and did not give any feedback that could help her improve. He would say Michelle was "doing fine" or "doing great" each time he observed a lesson during her internship. Michelle thought specific suggestions would have been useful; "I know I could definitely improve."

On the contrary, her current supervisor was supportive and often made helpful suggestions such as how to keep the students actively engaged and gave feedback based on her observations. Her supervisor said she regretted not spending as much time with Michelle and the other student teacher that she had, because "you guys know what you are doing." Because this university supervisor was also responsible for several interns who were just beginning their field

experiences and whom her supervisor felt needed more guidance, she did not have a choice but to cut back on observations for student teachers who were doing well. I asked if her university supervisor addressed culture in her feedback. "I don't know if she specifically addressed it, but I remember her relating a lot of her own experiences, like her language, how she had to learn English…it was interesting talking to her." Michelle did say that her supervisor did not say anything too specific about it.

Victoria described all her cooperating teachers very positively. Even when she had a significant concern about the focus on behavior modification to the detriment of academic instruction, she continued to describe the teacher of the self-contained ED classroom as "great." Victoria also felt very fortunate to have been placed with her cooperating teacher this semester and to have been able to work closely with Isabel's cooperating teacher. In fact, one of the most appealing aspects of Victoria's job offer in the bilingual early childhood class was that she would be so close to these cooperating teachers. Her cooperating teacher's organization was going to be extremely helpful for Victoria who admits that organization is difficult for her.

Victoria also spoke highly of her university supervisor whom she felt was "well experienced" in the area she was supervising in, unlike her previous supervisors. She was "wonderful" and "relaxed;" she was not concerned about

insignificant details such as if she had asked her notebook to be signed off by her cooperating teacher. When she would come and observe, she would "give me really good advice, awesome advice." One comment that her supervisor gave her was on Victoria's tendency to reinforce specific gender roles. Her supervisor gave her the example of how she spoke to a group of girls who were playing in the dress-up center. She talked to them about what movie they were pretending to go see and gave Cinderella as an example. Victoria said that her supervisor did "a great job" of addressing diversity in her feedback to her. She talked about "gender specific stuff" and other suggestions to help her make "a more appropriate classroom." The only other example Victoria gave of her supervisor addressing diversity in her feedback was her questioning her on her choice of "The Rainbow Fish" as a book read to the class. She asked why Victoria had selected that book and gave her the titles of other books that would have also been appropriate for the lesson. Her supervisor was careful to frame her comments as "stuff you should think about" and not as criticism.

Another notable phenomenon seen was the consistently high evaluation received by all four of the participants. They were all seen as clearly outstanding student teachers and given praising recommendations. Ratings of "Exceeds Expectations" or "Excellent" were given to all four student teachers for their overall student teaching performance.

Both Beth and Isabel both received the highest rating, “Excellent” by both their cooperating teacher and university supervisor. Isabel’s cooperating teacher even commented that she had never done that before with any of her many student teachers. “That means a lot because, I don't know, because I feel, I feel very comfortable and confident in myself, a lot more than the beginning, but I still feel like there is so much to learn.” Isabel also repeated her confidence in her abilities by writing on her final self-evaluation, “Overall, my strengths would be I am well prepared…”

Beth’s university supervisor indicated that almost all the individual indicators in the final evaluation were areas of strength; in fact, every indicator in the domain of “Professionalism” was marked as strength. Her cooperating teacher noted on her final evaluation that Beth was “…a creative, hard-working, and very motivated teacher. She is not afraid to try new ideas, and she incorporates suggestions quickly. She is going to be a wonderful complement to any campus.”

Isabel’s cooperating teacher and university supervisor also both marked a majority of the individual indicators, such as “relates content to students’ interests/backgrounds” or “challenges students to do their best” as areas of strength. Her university supervisor was equally complimentary saying Isabel “uses varied, creative and multi-sensory methods for her lessons. She also

demonstrates her knowledge and enthusiasm in working with students who have different learning needs."

The recommendation that her university supervisor gave Victoria included the comment that she "…is highly motivated to enhance her skills and instructional strategies to augment her present repertoire. She provides an engaging, caring environment for learners. Victoria actively reflects upon her practice, identifying effective strategies and alternatives for future instruction." Victoria's cooperating teacher said she was a "very capable student teacher" and would "highly recommend" her for an early childhood position. She also spoke highly of Victoria's professionalism and found her to be "a wonderful team player."

Michelle's final 3-way conference also went "really well." Both her cooperating teacher and her university supervisor "didn't have anything to say, except really positive things." Her cooperating teacher suggested that Michelle be a little "meaner" or stricter with her students' behavior, ranking her as "satisfactory" in the area of classroom management and organization on the final evaluation. Her university supervisor did not mark any areas of weakness on Michelle's final evaluation or give any further suggestions for improvement. Her cooperating teacher's final recommendation was "… would be a terrific asset to any prospective employer. She is a 'natural', - dedicated, skilled, and strives hard

to meet the students needs!" Michelle's university supervisor said "Miss [Johnson]...provides her students with experiences they can generalize to their daily life activities. She effectively modifies instruction to meet individual students' needs." The overall impression that these extremely favorable evaluations gave this group of student teachers was that they were prepared to be effective teachers. In the eyes of their cooperating teachers and university supervisors, these participants had successfully completed all that was expected for them to graduate from this teacher preparation program.

How the Program Addressed Culture. Another theme that was seen in three of the four participants was the idea that culture was addressed in the program's coursework. Isabel was the only student who had not taken the class that specifically dealt with CLD students with disabilities. In our first interview, I asked Isabel if any classes taught specifically about working with culturally and linguistically diverse students and she felt most courses in her program did address culture. "Pretty much any class now talks about [cultural backgrounds of students]…It is incorporated into a lot of the stuff…in the teaching…the past probably three years, I have seen a lot more stress toward the cultural and diversity." She mentioned an instructor who required that lessons the students were learning to develop be "formatted around the different cultures in your classroom." She also described an instructor who taught classes in Reading and

Social Studies. "…A big influence of hers is cultural, making sure that all different types of your children are included." Isabel thought more classes were discussing diversity, and gave two professors as examples who addressed diversity in their classes because they addressed special needs, or diversity in ability levels.

Isabel did say she felt prepared when I asked her in our initial interview about working with CLD students. "I feel, um… prepared, and I want more. I don't… I think I would be open, but I still need to learn more about my children. I think that is with any teacher." She is beginning to get to know the families of her current students. She was interested in "their backgrounds and their histories, and their cultures and their families' cultures." Isabel felt the courses she had taken had helped her a great deal "in understanding and preparing and ways of opening my eyes and thinking about different situations." She appreciated learning the "little things." One example she gave was of being a teacher who told her students to spell "Santa Claus." She felt she would have been a teacher who would do something like having student learn to spell Santa Claus correctly in class because she "wouldn't have thought of something like that."

For Beth, the most helpful class was the class that dealt specifically with culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities. She called it "a culture class" and thought that the class taught her "about the importance of

incorporating all different kinds of things." Beth really liked this course and felt she learned "a whole lot, I really did." Beth described the format of the class as primarily discussion of assigned readings, although that was not how the class was described by the instructor. In the class, they would often

> Talk about how to do, like holidays, and you know, not necessarily kids who don't speak English, but even,…if you don't know enough about the culture, how at least, to find out more about it and incorporate those types of things to feel included, and the things that you say that might negatively effect the kids that you would never even think of, that's the kind of stuff…

Beth said the "culture class" was the only class that discussed culture. She could not remember if any of the other courses she had taken mentioned the influence culture could have on student and teacher behavior, an indication that this content is not a consistent element of the program's coursework.

Michelle also took the "culture class." This class was the one Michelle felt addressed culture directly and helped her work effectively with students from diverse backgrounds. When I asked if she got any discussion of culture in any of her other classes, she hesitantly replied, "Uhm, not that I… I am sure we must have, I mean we had to have and I think we, yes we have." Michelle, however,

was not able to give the name of another class that addressed diversity issues directly.

When I asked Victoria if any of her classes specifically addressed cultural diversity, her response was, "…all my classes have that…" The professor of the course on language issues did a good job of addressing assessment issues pointing out areas of concern such as "You know, this assessment is invalid unless the child is monolingual…" She also said the professor of the transition class stressed that

> For students after high school you have to take into consideration the cultural background and what is considered acceptable and what is not acceptable…take cultural issues into consideration…uhm and what would be culturally appropriate when considering vocational training, and then programs and services, the different programs and services for bilingual students.

Victoria said she loved the class she had taken that dealt with working with diverse students with disabilities. Victoria felt she was further along in her understanding of culture and its influence because she was very open-minded. "I think I know the politically correct terms and always refer to the child, not the disability. You know, referring to people's race and ethnicity appropriately…all that kind of stuff, I think I already know." When I asked how she thought students

who had not taken the elective class that dealt specifically with CLD students with disabilities would feel in a diverse classroom, she said I would have to ask 'Beth,' "…who is like, you are my first Hispanic friend." Victoria said she felt "…very well prepared on a lot of…in a lot of ways" but that "I need more practice."

Victoria felt the most challenging aspect of teaching was learning a wide variety of different strategies but not knowing how to choose a strategy or the differences between those strategies because "kids are so different."

> I think I feel very prepared. Well, I think I feel very prepared in [the state where the study took place] from my background, being Cuban and living in Venezuela and living in Asia, I think that I have dealt with the cultures that I would have to deal with more in the classroom, just from personal experience.

Victoria felt that she did not learn about "how to deal with diversity, like practical things to do in the classroom." This comment was particularly noteworthy because Victoria was the only participant who was aware enough of the implications of a student's cultural background on interactions in the classroom, that she wanted specific information and strategies on how to best accommodate the needs of her students.

Benefits of Diverse Field Experiences. A sub-theme that emerged across the four participants was their appreciation for the diversity found in their field placements, in both student population and across the range of possible special education placements. Three of the four had attended schools with very little diversity in the student body and had limited contact with diverse cultures while growing up. All of the participants felt it was advantageous to have been placed in diverse schools.

Because of the lack of diversity in the schools Michelle had attended while she was growing up, she felt it was tremendously valuable that her placements had been in diverse schools. She completed her field experiences in two different elementary campuses with very diverse student populations. "It's just most of my intern and my student teaching so far have been with children of different cultural…different cultures than me, myself, so that has prepared me a lot, because otherwise I would never really have that much interaction, or exposure to teaching children of different backgrounds." Michelle was also happy to have done field placements in a variety of settings, like life skills, resource, and general education.

At the start of Michelle's student teaching placement, I asked her, "At this point, how prepared do you feel to work with diverse students?"

> I would say, maybe…a lot more prepared than when I first stepped in, you know, into [the university]. And when I first decided to go into education. But, I feel somewhat prepared. It's just most of my intern and my student teaching so far have been with children of different cultural…different cultures than me, myself, so that has prepared me a lot, because otherwise I would never really have that much interaction, or exposure to teaching children of different backgrounds. I would say I feel somewhat prepared, maybe about 75%, but I am still nervous about my first couple of years.

Isabel "loved working at lower SES schools." She said most of her experience has been with "Hispanic, or bilingual, but primarily Hispanic" students. She described her experience in the bilingual class as very rewarding, despite not being able to speak Spanish. Isabel also said she felt more comfortable in schools with diverse student populations because that is the type of school all her field experiences had been in. Isabel thought it was to her advantage to be around a variety of cultures.

> I think diversity is good. I mean if I had a child, I would like them in a diverse school. Because I think it is important for them to get to know other cultures and not, judge people by their behaviors not by what they

may look like. You know what I mean. I think that is extremely important.

Beth claimed to be "pretty prepared" to work with diverse students. One of the reasons she felt confident was her experience in three different diverse schools during her program; thus, Beth thought it was important to place students in diverse school. She felt fortunate that her placements had been in diverse schools because students from several other cohorts were placed in higher SES schools with less diversity in their student body. As a result of her placements in diverse schools, she felt more prepared to work with diverse students. "Every school I have been at was very diverse." We talked about the type of school she would like to teach in and whether it mattered to her if the student population came from diverse background.

> It matters to me now. It didn't as much before I came to school and I talked to you about all that and I was afraid to work with, you know, kids that I hadn't been around before, and now it's like, I can't imagine not, you know. It would be kind of weird not to work in a diverse school.

Victoria thought that the program could help new teachers be effective with diverse students by providing experience with diverse cultures. "I know that sounds really awful 'cause how is that going, how is everybody going to have that? If they come from a certain background but, over time…" Victoria felt that

it was beneficial that she had always been in diverse schools. She was concerned about

> Students who want to work in very high SES, suburbia, Caucasian setting, and never experience anything else are going to get that first student, and not have equal expectations for them, and that are not…so I don't want to say that students should be forced to, but I think that we should be given the opportunity to work in many different settings.

But, overall, when I asked Victoria if she felt prepared, she said, "I really do…I feel…I mean to do what I want to do." Victoria felt a helpful requirement would have been to require student teachers to observe during the first week of school because "I have no idea how to do the first, start off the school year stuff." She also commented on her experiences in the range of settings she had completed field placements in.

> I mean…luckily I had that one semester when I did ED/BD, bilingual… resource, I covered the resource area and then I did the after school program with dyslexics, so I got the dyslexia thing down, on my own I was with life skills…and with medically dependent children and in his life skills class with him and I kinda got an overview of life skills…and we do speech, it has been great…So, I feel kind of prepared, but like if you ask

[Beth], she couldn't do anything but resource, she wouldn't know what to do…

Victoria felt it was extremely beneficial for her to have had the array of field experiences she did. She also had some personal experiences that helped her be more familiar with certain settings or disabilities. Thinking about my other participant, Beth, who had only worked in a resource class. Victoria commented that she would be at a significant disadvantage because of this.

Conclusion

This chapter summarized the significant findings from each participant and presented the themes that were consistent with all four of the participants. The participants all had unique personal histories that impacted how they understood culture and its influence. This group of student teachers also felt that they were prepared to work effectively with CLD students with disabilities, an impression that was reinforced by those responsible for the supervision of these preservice teachers. A discussion of the findings and their implications are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The central question that this study sought to investigate was, "What are special education preservice student teachers' perceptions of their readiness to serve culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) exceptional students?" The significance of understanding the influence of cultural and linguistic characteristics of students from diverse backgrounds on the teaching-learning process cannot be overstated.

> Effective teachers figure out if something unexpected from their point of view is a quirk, a passing fancy, or a result of a custom or value with deep roots in a student's cultural identity. Recognizing a cultural pattern is only the beginning. Teacher education and professional development must also foster a teacher's ability to choose an effective teaching strategy-be it to use the cultural response, adapt it, avoid it, or find a way to coexist with it (Strickland & Snow, 2002, p. 133).

The findings of this study illustrate the complexity of the issues related to preparing teachers to work with CLD students discussed in the literature. The principal finding of the this study was that, for these four participants, the student teaching process, in essence, served as an obstacle to the development of an

understanding of the influence of culture and language on student behavior and performance in the classroom.

The data generated in this study seemed to fall into two domains, the first being issues relating to the cultural and racial identity of preservice teachers and the second being issues relating to teacher preparation. While these two domains are separate, they are also notably related to one another, and thus, must be considered together. In this chapter, issues relating to preservice teacher's background and identity and issues related to teacher preparation are presented. The implications of the findings on teacher preparation and areas for future research are also discussed. Limitations of this study conclude the chapter.

In discussing the study findings, the reader should know that the teacher preparation program these participants were completing required all students to complete a course that dealt specifically with cultural and linguistic issues. A description of the course, *Sociocultural Influences on Learning*, is included in Appendix B. In addition to the required class, as discussed earlier, three of the four participants had taken the class, *CLD Students with Disabilities,* that was offered as an elective course in the program. The fact that three of the four participants chose to take the elective course offered is noteworthy and may indicate a higher level of interest in becoming an effective teacher of CLD students.

Issues Relating to Preservice Teachers' Background and Identity

Many preservice teachers operate from a limited knowledge about culture and identity (Cockrell, Placier, Cockrell, & Middleton, 1999). In addition, most preservice teachers have not had the opportunity to consider their own cultural background and its impact on their behavior and expectations for others' behavior. The participants in this study had an awareness of the importance of culture; however, at the time of the study, their level of understanding of the influence had not been developed. This may have been the result of limited life experiences with diversity, or limited discussion of the issues in their preparation program, including their student teaching experience.

Self-Understanding and Its Impact on Our Perceptions

Krall (1988) discusses how our self-understanding, which is a reflection of who we are and what we are in relation to the world, comes to us through our individual perceptions of the world. Our innate abilities and our individual sociocultural histories influence these perceptions. Although three participants had taken the "culture class," they seemed to have a cursory understanding of their own culture as was discussed in the previous chapter.

Patton (1998) discusses how both teachers and students work from their individual culturally-bound frame of reference. This point was acknowledged by two of the participants, Beth and Michelle. Teachers are unaware of how their

behavior and the fact that they take certain things for granted is the result of the "cultural baggage" they bring to the classroom (Locke, as cited in Hollins, 1996). Beth recognized that she was a "product of my culture." Although she acknowledged this fact, she did not understand how this played out in the classroom. Beth shared that she had very little tolerance for students who were disrespectful to her as the teacher in the classroom. Her expectation of respect for all adults was culturally bound, a point that she did not seem to realize.

It is important for teachers to examine their values, opinions, attitudes, and beliefs in relation to their cultural origin and socialization. Michelle agreed that she would need to look at how her culture affects her in the classroom because it is "very ingrained in my teaching."

Views of Culture as Artifact and Behavior

With the exception of Victoria, the participants in the study had limited information about their cultural background, despite the fact that three of the four participants had the opportunity to consider cultural issues during the elective course, *CLD Students with Disabilities*. According to Hollins (1996), teaching CLD students requires self-knowledge about one's own experiences and cultural perspective, knowledge of the culture and experiences of their students in and out of school, and content area knowledge and strategies to reframe existing curricula and adapt instruction. "Teachers who are aware of their own thoughts and

behaviors in cross-cultural interaction are better prepared to respond in ways that will improve teaching and learning in a culturally diverse setting" (Hollins, 1996, p. 36). Michelle was the only participant who discussed the importance of self-knowledge; she was cognizant of the need to examine her assumptions because they impacted her instruction in the classroom.

According to Hollin's typology for defining culture, teachers can view culture as artifact and behavior (Type I), or social and political relationships (Type II), or affect, behavior, and intellect (Type III). Enabling teachers to view culture as affect, behavior, and intellect should be the goal of teacher training programs. Hollins (1996) describes a process developing a Type III perspective of culture that includes six interrelated and interdependent aspects. The six aspects are: objectifying culture, personalizing culture, inquiring about students' cultures and communities, applying knowledge about culture to teaching, formulating theory linking culture and school learning, and transforming professional practice to better meet the needs of students from different cultural and experiential backgrounds. This process of developing a working definition of culture will allow the teacher to understand the relationship between culture, cognition, and school learning.

Using Hollins' (1996) typology of culture in teaching practices, three of the study participants appeared to view culture as artifact and behavior. Michelle

and Isabel often discussed observable expressions of culture, such as dress or ceremonies. In this view of culture, because learning processes are assumed to be universal, all children are expected to learn in the same way and are treated the same. Again, Isabel appeared to feel this way when she discussed all the students in her class were doing fine despite being from different cultures. The medical model appeared to be used to explain the student difficulties Beth was referring to in her comment, "some kids are just ED." In this case, behavioral difficulties were seen as an intrinsic deficit and not seen as result of a student's incompatibility with the learning environment. This would seem to support the view of culture as artifact and behavior.

Approaches to instruction, in the view of culture as artifact and behavior, would give little attention to social and cultural needs and the cultural knowledge learners bring to school (Hollins, 1996). My participants did not specifically address the culture of their students. In this view, basic skills are remediated paying close attention to sequenced objectives. These student teachers were addressing the students' specific disability characteristics by planning carefully sequenced instruction. Because they were individualizing based on disability, they felt they were addressing all the needs of their students, as is common with special education teachers who confuse cultural diversity with disability (Pugach & Seidl, 1998).

Most likely, Victoria's view of culture would be classified as social and political relationship. Because Victoria had experienced more interaction with different cultures, she was better able to interpret student behaviors as culturally-based. She demonstrated her understanding of cultural differences when she discussed the student from Korea who did not want to have his shoes on in the classroom and the boy who was slow to clean up after himself. Cultural clashes are less likely when one has more cultural and linguistic knowledge and when beliefs overlap with those from different cultural backgrounds (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Even the best of intentions of both the student and cooperating teacher, however, are not enough to ensure that students' needs were met. Although Victoria had a greater understanding of culture and its influence on student behavior, she did not however, translate that knowledge into practice during my observations or in our discussions on Tricia. A great deal of introspection would be needed before any of the study participants were able to understand the relationship between culture, cognition, and school learning.

Teacher educators stress that teachers of CLD students must be comfortable with their own cultural background before they can develop effective instructional strategies for CLD students (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998). Because of the lack of empirical data on effective programs designed to increase the cultural

competence of preservice teachers, teacher educators are continuing to struggle with the question of how to prepare teachers to work with CLD students.

Issues Relating to Teacher Preparation

Issues relating to teacher preparation include concerns relating to program content and field experiences. There was a marked difference between what the student teachers in this study thought they needed to know to work successfully with CLD students and what the literature describes as necessary knowledge and skills for all new special education teachers.

Inclusion of Culture and Diversity Issues in Program Content

Although the participants said that culture and diversity issues were discussed in the majority of their courses, the required class, *Sociocultural Influences on Learning* that was taken by all four participants, was not mentioned in any of the interviews or follow-up discussions. The class was listed by two of the participants, Beth and Isabel, on the demographic profile completed at the beginning of the study as a class that would help them work effectively with CLD students. The fact that the one class required by the university dealing with cultural influences on learning was not mentioned by the participants when discussing aspects of their preparation program that helped prepare them to work effectively with CLD students is significant. As discussed earlier, three of the four participants chose to take the elective course, *CLD Students with Disabilities*.

When asked on the demographic profile and in interview which courses helped them become a better teacher of CLD students, these participants included this class.

Benefits of Field Placements in Diverse Schools

Customarily, student teaching is the decisive culminating experience of teacher preparation programs. It is also the most intensive sustained experience student teachers have had, even though they have completed field experiences in their previous methods courses. Field placement in socio-culturally diverse settings is a strategy included in preparation programs to enhance the competency of new teachers to work with diverse students (Betsinger, Garcia, & Guerra, 2001; Cwick, Woolridge, & Petch-Hogan, 2001; Gay, 1993). The preparation program completed by the participants also has a policy of placing student teachers in schools with culturally and linguistically diverse students.

White females in their early twenties have traditionally been the demographics of new teachers, and this trend is expected to continue (Artiles, Trent, Hoffman-Kipp, & Lopez-Torres, 2000). Many of these new teachers, much like the participants in this study, have had limited contact with people from cultures different from their own. Preservice teachers often identify field experiences as the most valuable part of their preparation program (Cwick, Woolridge, & Petch-Hogan, 2001). The participants in this study concurred,

adding that they felt preservice teachers should be in the classroom as soon as possible.

It is generally agreed that greater self-awareness is needed to help new teachers interact with a less biased orientation (Cwick, Woolridge, & Petch-Hogan, 2001). One avenue for achieving increased self-awareness is to provide preservice teachers with extensive field experiences in diverse settings in which to apply course content related to CLD students. Both Michelle and Victoria commented that the program could be improved if they began their field placements earlier. Beth mentioned that she was initially afraid to work with students she had not been around before, so she was grateful to have been placed in diverse schools for her field placements. In fact, she now said that she could not imagine *not* working in a school with a diverse student population. Michelle also expressed her appreciation for the experience with students from diverse backgrounds. She acknowledged that she would not have had much exposure to or interaction with CLD students if her placements had not been in diverse schools.

Cwick, Woolridge, & Petch-Hogan (2001) note that, "through these diverse placements, the goal is to provide preservice teachers with an understanding of factors affecting the teaching and learning process" (p. 16). Although the workload of field placements can be time intensive, the investment

of time is needed to provide preservice teachers with a realistic perspective of teaching. According to Zeichner (1993), it is also important to include debriefing discussions that will encourage the reflection and introspection needed to deconstruct deficit assumptions about CLD students and their families. While the field experiences completed by this group of participants were in schools with diverse student populations, the program did not include a reflective component to enhance their understanding of diverse students and their families.

Issues Relating to the Supervision of Student Teachers

In the preparation program completed by the study participants, student teachers are evaluated by a cooperating teacher and a university supervisor. The cooperating teachers and university supervisors who worked with my participants considered them to be remarkable student teachers. The student teachers in the study also revered their cooperating teachers and supervisors. However, the cooperating teachers and university supervisors of the student teachers who participated in the study did not address the need to consider the cultural and linguistic characteristics of students in their classrooms as was evidenced by the lack of attention to these issues in the written feedback provided to student teachers and discussions with the supervisors as reported by the participants. As a result, these preservice teachers received the message that they were doing an effective job of planning and delivering instruction for their students without

addressing their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This message was also reinforced by the positive feedback and evaluations they received. Thus, the participants did not question their readiness to effectively work with CLD students. While there were very few instances when I observed students not being successful as a result of the student teacher failing to address the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of her students, there were instances, in our interviews and follow-up discussions that it was clear students would have been negatively impacted by their lack of understanding. For example, in our follow-up discussions, Isabel commented several times that Tricia's behavioral problems had been escalating as the semester progressed; however, Isabel did not attribute any of her misbehavior to the lack of understanding of the language being used in the classroom.

Professional Standards for Special Education Teachers

The Council for Exceptional Children standards include knowledge and skill statements related to culture and diversity in the eight core areas. Examples include "effects of cultural and linguistic differences on growth and development" and "differing learning styles of individuals with exceptional learning needs including those from culturally diverse backgrounds and strategies for addressing these styles." There are 22 knowledge or skill statements that specifically address cultural or linguistic differences (A complete listing is available in Appendix A).

In comparing these standards for beginning teachers and the descriptions provided for the required coursework for special education certification, there was only one area of agreement. This point of consensus dealt with the assessment of students from CLD backgrounds. The course description of the required course on assessment is said to include a discussion of "issues of cultural bias in the assessment process as well as the need for understanding cultural diversity…"

The course descriptions of the remaining required coursework for special education certification do not specifically list any reference to cultural diversity issues. The elective course, *CLD Students with Disabilities*, is specifically designed to increase student awareness and knowledge of issues related to serving CLD students with disabilities. Two participants felt that this course should be made a requirement of the program. While the participants who had taken this course reported that they "learned quite a bit," this one course was not sufficient to allow this knowledge to be adequately understood, reinforced, and retained. Also problematic is the issue of multicultural content being included in a separate, isolated class. The isolation of multicultural content in a single course instead of being integrated into the entire preparation program is consistent with traditional approaches to addressing diversity in teacher preparation (Gollnick, 1995) which have, to this point, been unsuccessful in adequately preparing preservice teachers to work with students with disabilities.

Importance of Challenging Deficit Views about CLD Students and Families

Although in our discussions the participants repeatedly stated that they understood that one's culture and language had an impact on their behavior, they did not demonstrate this understanding. Even though the participants had a level of awareness of culture, they seemed to truly be unaware of all the facets of effectively addressing cultural and linguistic differences of their students. Pugach and Seidl (1998) found that when teachers do not understand culture, they are more likely to view it as deficient or abnormal.

Student teachers can be expected to maintain the assumptions of their cultural background and carry those assumptions into the classroom unless they are intellectually challenged (Wiest, 1998). Victoria was appreciative that her field placements had been in a range of socioeconomic levels as well as special education settings. Interestingly, Victoria expressed her desire to work only in lower income schools. When I questioned her about this preference, she recalled her experience in a higher income school. She discussed how critical she normally was of herself and how she did not need the parents of her students to also be critical of her performance. She also mentioned that the parents at that school had not been appreciative of her efforts with their children.

Isabel expressed similar concerns about the level of parental involvement in a higher income school. She had the opportunity to interview for a teaching

position in a higher income district near where her husband would be attending graduate school. When we discussed the possible position, one concern she had was that the parents of the students in a higher income school would be much more involved than the parents of the students she had worked with thus far. She seemed to be weary of the increased level of scrutiny these parents would give her. In our initial interview, Isabel said she "loved working at lower SES schools," and thought "diversity is good."

Their motivation for working in schools with lower socioeconomic levels was problematic to me for many reasons. It appeared that both Victoria and Isabel were apprehensive about the level of parental involvement and felt that in a lower income school, there would be less involvement on the part of the students' families. The concern is, one could reason, that they would not feel as accountable for the level of instruction they were providing for their students. It was also troubling that Victoria felt that the parents in the higher income school did not appreciate her efforts with their children. Again, this implies that her efforts would be much more appreciated by parents in a low-income school. Another issue that arises from these comments was that it appeared that Isabel and Victoria's primary concern was on their own well-being rather than on meeting children's educational needs.

When I asked my participants about the knowledge and skills teachers needed to work well with CLD students, many descriptive phrases like "it was important that teachers be respectful, compassionate, and approachable" and "know your students" were given by the participants. Their responses to this question were also disconcerting. The majority of their responses were personality attributes that, while important, were not necessarily related to providing quality instruction. Instead, these comments reflect the sentiment expressed by Isabel that she wanted to work in lower income schools "so she could bring them up."

Isabel and Victoria's assumptions about the families of their students influenced how they interacted with them. Isabel mentioned several times how she felt many of her students came from homes that were not "very well structured" and how she was concerned "seeing how the children were raised in their homes." Her deficit views of CLD families seemed to go unquestioned by those around her during the time we spent together. One of the responsibilities of a teacher preparation program is to make students aware of the bias and assumptions they have so that they can address their misconceptions about CLD students and their families. After becoming more aware of the influence of culture in the classroom, Betsinger, Garcia, and Guerra (2001) found that teachers became less likely to continue to hold deficit views of CLD students and their

families. Once they were able to overcome their 'savior' complex, they were able to focus more on the role of the school in students' success or failure.

Ultimately, the findings of this study are consistent with the literature calling for the transformation of teacher education programs to address diversity; i.e., given the apparent failure to explicitly integrate and reinforce the importance of this topic throughout the program, it is not surprising that my participants' understandings of culture reflected their own personal limited experiences with diversity. Even Victoria, having been raised in a bilingual home with a strong sense of ethnic identity, could not be expected to translate that personal experience into culturally appropriate pedagogical knowledge. In its current format, program graduates are not able to meet the beginning standards for new special education teachers set out by the Council for Exceptional Children.

Implications of Findings

Generally, students from CLD backgrounds are offered lower quality educational experiences than students from the majority culture (Blair & Jones, 1998). Often, students from diverse backgrounds feel that they must make a choice between being true to their cultural identity and being successful in school. This occurs because their cultural background is frequently not valued or is misunderstood by school staff (Kea & Utley, 1998). This condition will continue unless dramatic changes are made to existing teacher preparation programs.

Although this study provided insight into the perceptions of only four student teachers, the patterns in these findings are consistent with other studies of preservice teachers in documenting the inadequacy of existing teacher preparation programs to develop cross-cultural competence. From this perspective, the results of this study can inform similar programs about how to better prepare new teachers to work with CLD students.

Implications for Teacher Preparation Programs

Need for Infusion of Cultural Content. Trent and Artilles (1998) state that only deliberate efforts to raise preservice teachers' awareness and understanding of issues affecting CLD students and families will allow them to plan appropriate instruction. In order for cultural content to be infused throughout course content, teacher educators must also possess a thorough understanding of the influence of culture and language.

> There are some educators who believe that differences between cultures are trivial and that all people are basically the same. It is for this reason that many reject information about cultural differences because they equate these generalizations with stereotyping. Yet, knowledge and awareness of cultural differences along with teachers getting to know their individual students' special qualities and backgrounds will alleviate such

stereotyping and allow for generalizations that apply in many, but not necessarily all, cases (Blair & Jones, 1998, p. 6).

For a program to attempt to create teachers who will be effective in CLD classrooms, after cultural knowledge and skills have been infused throughout the program curriculum, it is important to build in opportunities to apply and reinforce these skills as soon as possible in actual classrooms (Synder, 1998). It is key to ensure new teachers are culturally competent. Preparing new teachers with the skills necessary to then translate the newly acquired cultural knowledge into appropriate instructional strategies in the classroom is the ultimate goal in preparing teachers to become cultural brokers (Gay, 1995).

This study highlights that one or two multicultural education courses in isolation do not work; thus, it is important that teacher preparation programs go beyond placement in a diverse school, and the requirement of one course on socio-cultural issues. There is a critical need for teacher preparation programs to infuse cultural content throughout the required coursework. This will allow students sufficient exposure to issues that are often foreign to them to be able to critically consider the appropriateness of their instructional decisions. The emphasis on addressing student's cultural and linguistic background will also serve to draw attention to the importance of this critical consideration in instructional planning, which has been lacking to this point. While many teacher

educators are becoming increasingly aware of the literature on effective practices for CLD students, this continues to be an on-going process.

Socialization of Student Teachers. One factor that may have influenced Isabel and Victoria's decision not to question the judgments and decisions of their cooperating teachers is the socialization that student teachers encounter during their field experiences. This occurs with both the cooperating teacher as well as the university supervisor. When a preservice teacher is placed in a teacher's classroom, the cooperating teacher becomes a tremendously influential factor in the growth and development of the student teacher's instructional and behavioral repertoires (Kettle & Sellars, 1996). Student teachers observe the teaching and behavioral management style of the cooperating teacher and oftentimes, feel constrained to conform their own teaching style to that of their cooperating teacher (Synder, 1998). This may be because the student teacher feels obligated to the cooperating teacher because he/she is allowing the student teacher to teach in their classroom. Another possible factor is that the student teacher would like to ensure a positive evaluation by their cooperating teacher. The student teacher may feel that if they imitate the teaching behaviors of the cooperating teacher, the cooperating teacher may evaluate their teaching performance more favorably (Gonzalez & Carter, 1996).

The university supervisor can also be a strong influence on the teaching and behavioral management style of a student teacher (Synder, 1998). Again, because the student teacher would like to receive the highest evaluation possible, they may carefully follow the suggestions given by the university supervisor, even if they do not agree with the feedback. Student teachers often learn quickly that their experience in a field placement will be congenial if they choose to emulate their cooperating teacher (Talvitie, Peltolallio, & Mannisto, 2000).

This socialization process may have contributed to the needs of Tricia not being met. Isabel and Victoria may have felt uncomfortable questioning their cooperating teachers because they were so highly regarded and they were dependent on their final evaluation to help them secure a teaching position. This socialization resulted in the cooperating teachers becoming role models that the student teachers then emulated. For these student teachers, they were successful in meeting the expectations of both their cooperating teacher and university supervisor, which is evidenced in their extremely high evaluations.

Need for Cultural Feedback Through Supervision. Another need is for those responsible for supervising students while in their field placements to be aware of the influence of culture and language. When possible, cooperating teachers are carefully screened to ensure a successful experience for the student teacher placed with that teacher. Although the majority of cooperating teachers

selected to work with student teachers are highly respected teachers in their school, they frequently do not have the background to reinforce the importance of addressing a student's cultural background when designing instruction for students with disabilities. The lack of training for cooperating teachers is an obstacle to mentoring success (Loving & Graham, 2000).

The same could be true of the university supervisors assigned to work with student teachers. Limited training in supervision may be provided and some supervisors may not have an understanding of the influence of culture and language. Even when supervisors do have the knowledge and skills themselves, they may not be effective in providing the student teacher feedback that is culturally sensitive. When I served as a university supervisor, I often failed to discuss the need to ensure that the instruction being planned and delivered by the student teacher was culturally relevant for the class they were assigned to. This also seemed to be the case for two of the three supervisors of the study participants. These two supervisors were also doctoral students in multicultural special education, yet failed to incorporate their knowledge of the issues related to cultural and linguistic diversity into their feedback. Based on this experience, it is apparent that the training university supervisors receive must address the evaluation of culturally responsive instruction. When both the cooperating teacher and university supervisor fail to address culture in their feedback to a student

teacher, they are effectively, implying that it is not necessary to ensure their instruction is culturally and linguistically relevant for their students.

In order for it to be an expectation that students' culture will be addressed when planning for instruction, all involved must be diligent in ensuring this occurs. It is necessary to have current classroom teachers who are aware of the issues relating to working with CLD students who can then serve as cooperating teachers in the series of field placements completed by preservice teachers.

It will also be necessary to make certain that those serving as university supervisors also have the knowledge and skills necessary to work effectively with CLD students and are able to share that knowledge base with the preservice teachers. Having cooperating teachers and university supervisors who understand the importance of addressing students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds will ensure that the preservice teachers they are responsible for supervising have those skills reinforced in their field experiences.

Another critical aspect to the development of teacher preparation programs that address the needs of CLD students is the format of the evaluation forms used in the supervision of student teachers. The observation and evaluation forms used by the supervisors in this study did not have any direct reference to addressing the cultural and linguistic background of students. It would have been up to the supervisor to apply any of the current indicators to CLD students. For

new evaluation forms to be developed, it is necessary for explicit goals and outcomes to be agreed upon. The new evaluation would then be designed to measure if those goals were met (Limback & Mansfield, 2002).

Loving and Graham (2000) discuss the development of an evaluation tool that considers the developmental nature of learning to teach. Three phases, the Initial Stage, Growth and Refinement Stage, and Refinement Stage, are included. The three phases are discussed in relation to competencies in the areas of management, instruction, and professionalism. The three areas of competencies in each stage of development are then also related to the five, learner-centered, state competencies that were developed for the state of Texas.

Other suggestions were discussed by Graham concerning the evaluation of student teachers (1997). One suggestion involved reconceptualizing the roles of cooperating teacher and university supervisor as data collectors instead of judges or evaluators of student teaching performance. A second suggestion discussed changing the focus of evaluation away from how a student teacher is performing and focusing on how children are learning instead. This suggestion would seem especially appropriate for special educators.

Implications for Future Research

There are several areas for future research suggested by this study. Given the exploratory and qualitative nature of this study, the findings serve to raise a

series of questions for future research. Studies are needed which enhance our understanding of the complex interrelationships between culture, language and disability; between entering characteristics of teacher education candidates and the characteristics of their teacher preparation program; and between the various components of teacher education programs. Answers to the following questions would enhance the knowledge base in the area of multicultural special education teacher preparation.

1. What is the relationship between the level of cultural awareness of preservice teacher candidates and their perceptions of their readiness to work with CLD students with disabilities? Because this study included a small number of participants, further research on this topic is needed to add to the database this study began.
2. What is the relationship between the level of understanding of the interaction between culture, language, and disability of preservice candidates upon entry into the preparation program and the components of their teacher preparation program? Depending on their level of understanding, a preparation program should be able to provide experiences that will allow students to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to work with CLD students with disabilities. Understanding this relationship will allow teacher educators to design programs that take the

level of cultural awareness into consideration and include a variety of experiences that will build on the knowledge and skills preservice teacher candidates begin the preparation program with.

3. What is the impact of having preservice teachers placed with culturally competent cooperating teachers on the acquisition and use of culturally relevant instruction? The literature on teacher education has demonstrated the tremendous influence cooperating teachers can have on the teaching and behavior management style of preservice teachers. Thus, it will be beneficial to examine the effect of the cooperating teacher can have on the development of culturally competent teachers.

4. What life experiences, background characteristics, and racial/cultural identity stages are linked to deficit thinking vs. an empowerment perspective? This information will aid teacher educators in selecting appropriate strategies based on the characteristics of preservice teachers to increase the level of understanding of culture and language on learning.

5. What program coursework and series of field experiences will be effective in enhancing student teachers' understanding of the influence of culture on teaching and learning? The literature does not yet include empirical data on the most effective program designs for the development

of culturally competent teachers. Program changes should be based on empirical data.

Currently, we cannot specifically evaluate the impact of cultural diversity training on the use of effective teaching strategies for CLD students (Valles, 1998). Holm and Nations-Johnson (1994) found that student teachers often ignore the information presented to them in their coursework once they enter the classroom. Studies that examine the use of culturally responsive instruction by student teachers would aid in understanding and remedying this situation. As the diversity among students continues to increase, and the cultural discontinuities between students and teachers is expected to persist, studies examining how to prepare teachers to work with diverse students need to be conducted to understand how to improve teacher preparation programs to adequately meet the needs of all students.

Limitations of the Study

Little research has been conducted that examines new teachers' readiness to serve CLD students. This was an exploratory study that will add to the limited research on diversity issues in special education. This study was not designed to be a program evaluation of the special education program completed by the participants, although there may be implications for possible improvements. It must be noted that the findings of this study were influenced by the interaction of

the characteristics of the four participants and the design of the preparation program they recently completed. Factors that may have affected the impact of the preparation program on the understanding of culture and its influence for these participants, such as regular attendance for required courses, quality of instruction, student effort, and so on, were beyond the scope of this exploratory study. Therefore, it is important to recognize the interaction of participants and the program characteristics when deciding the application of the study findings.

There were several additional limitations to this study on student teachers' perceptions of their readiness to serve CLD students with disabilities. First, much of the data generated in this study relied on the self-reports of the participants. Because I was relying on their self-disclosure, I must also acknowledge the impact I may have had on their responses. There may have been efforts on their part to say what they thought I wanted to hear. However, because I spent an extended amount of time with each participant and made efforts to not be seen in a supervisory capacity, I hoped to lessen their desire to provide what they perceived to be the desired responses to my questions.

Second, the sample size was limited by the number of students completing their student teaching who could serve as possible participants and by the number who then also volunteered to participate. In view of the fact that this study examined the perceptions of four student teachers, the transferability of the

findings is limited. Caution should be used when applying these findings to other student teachers.

Conclusion

By and large, all four of my participants felt they were prepared to work with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and were satisfied with their preparation as prospective special education teachers. Cooperating teachers and university supervisors were equally satisfied with the performance and potential—all were rated very highly as either "Exceeding Expectations" or "Excellent" on their final evaluations. The high evaluations given by those responsible for supervising the student teachers in the study only served to reinforce the perceptions of the student teachers that they were adequately prepared to work with CLD students.

These perceptions, of the student teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors, become problematic when they are considered in relation to the professional literature about effective instruction for CLD students with disabilities. If CLD students with disabilities are to be provided with equitable educational opportunities, their cultural, linguistic, and disability-related characteristics must be addressed when designing instruction (Cloud, 1993; Garcia & Malkin, 1993).

In conclusion, this study found that, as this group of preservice teachers prepared to graduate from their teacher preparation program, they were entering the profession with a limited awareness of the implications of culture in the classroom. This finding has significant implications for their (in)ability to create effective learning environments for CLD students with disabilities. As the number of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds continues to grow, it becomes increasingly urgent to study and develop teacher preparation programs that will effectively meet the needs of the entire student population.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

CEC Common Core of Knowledge and Skills Essential for all Beginning Special Education Teachers Specifically addressing Cultural or Linguistic Differences

CC: Common Core - 1. Philosophical, Historical, and Legal Foundations of Special Education

Knowledge:

- Variations in beliefs, traditions, and values across and within cultures and their effects on relationships among child, family, and schooling
- Issues in definition and identification of individuals with exceptional learning needs, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Strategies used by diverse populations to cope with a legacy of former and continuing racism.
- Ways specific cultures are negatively stereotyped.
- Impact of the dominant culture on shaping schools and the individuals who study and work in them.
- Potential impact of differences in values, languages, and customs that can exist between the home and school.

CC: Common Core - 2. Characteristics of Learners

Knowledge:

- Characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the child and the family.
- Effects of cultural and linguistic differences on growth and development.

CC: Common Core - 3. Assessment, Diagnosis, and Evaluation

Skills:

- Use assessment information in making eligibility, program, and placement decisions for individuals with exceptional learning needs, including those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

CC: Common Core - 4. Instructional Content and Practice

Knowledge:

- Differing learning styles of individuals with exceptional learning needs including those from culturally diverse backgrounds and strategies for addressing these styles.
- Cultural perspectives influencing the relationship among families, schools, and communities as related to effective instruction.

Skills:

- Develop and select instructional content, resources, and strategies that respond to cultural, linguistic, and gender differences.

CC: Common Core - 5. Planning and Managing the Teaching and Learning Environment

Skills:

- Create a safe, equitable, positive, and supportive learning environment in which diversities are valued.

CC: Common Core - 6. Managing Student Behavior and Social Interaction Skills

Knowledge:

- Strategies for preparing individuals to live harmoniously and productively in a culturally diverse world.

Skills:

- Organize, develop, and sustain learning environments that support positive intercultural experiences.
- Mediate controversial intercultural issues among students within the learning environment in ways that enhance any culture, group, or person.

CC: Common Core - 7. Communication and Collaborative Partnerships

Knowledge:

- Culturally responsive factors that promote effective communication and collaboration with individuals, families, school personnel, and community members.

Skills:

- Communicate effectively with families of students from diverse backgrounds.

CC: Common Core - 8. Professionalism and Ethical Practices

Knowledge:

- Characteristics of one's own culture and use of language and the ways in which these can differ from other cultures and uses of language.
- Personal cultural biases and differences that affect one's teaching.
- Ways of behaving and communicating among cultures that can lend themselves to misinterpretation and misunderstanding.

Skills:

- Demonstrate sensitivity for the culture, language, religion, gender, disability, socio-economic status, and sexual orientation of individual students.

Taken from: The Council for Exceptional Children. (2000). *What every special educator must know: The international standards for the preparation and licensure of special educators.* (4th ed.). Reston, VA: The Council for Exceptional Children.

Appendix B

Program Sequence

Overview of Disabilities – This course provides an overview of individual differences in the school-age population, viewing exceptionalities in the context of normal development. It emphasizes wide variations in individual characteristics, including those which affect the learning processes: behavior differences, learning disabilities, giftedness, mental retardation, sensory differences, language disorders, and physical disabilities. An orientation in assistive technology is presented along with current research and theoretical issues related to variations among children and the teacher's role in shaping attitudes toward differences is emphasized.

Language Issues – The focus of this course is on the language development of normal children as well as on the delays or disorders which can occur among school-age children. Ways to identify language delays and deviations among special education students including instruments and techniques for assessment are included. Educational characteristics and needs of children who are linguistically and culturally different, learning disabled, auditorially handicapped, visually handicapped, and severely handicapped are also reviewed. Competencies in using Assistive Technology for peers with language disorders and more severe disabilities are completed.

Behavior Management – This course provides knowledge and skills in the management of student's behavior. Course content includes assessment/evaluation of behavior, behavior management techniques, classroom organization to prevent or discourage inappropriate behavior, instructional techniques to maximize appropriate behavior, and the development and use of the Behavior management plan. Methods for charting and evaluating behavior using technology as well as other techniques are presented.

Basic Assessment – This course provides an introduction to assessment materials. It describes the role of assessment in the identification and referral of students with special needs. Issues of cultural bias in the assessment process as well as the need for understanding cultural diversity are highlighted in the course. The course presents information about the concepts and procedures of assessment, assessment models, assessment practices and tools, and the relationship of assessment to educational practice. Information about the use and interpretation of formal and informal assessment devices is also presented.

Programs and Services in Special Education – This course provides an overview of the process for identifying a child with special needs, and describes the procedure for referral to special education services. The development of the Individualized Education Program is included. Communication among families and professionals for effective education is emphasized. Legal and ethical aspects of education for the special learner are described.

Transition – The course provides an overview of vocational and post-educational issues which affect the individual with disabilities. It is designed to help students develop the ability to work with career/vocational training programs, to access and program for exceptional individuals entering the vocational environment, and to infuse career concepts into academic areas.

Instructional Methods in Special Education – This course presents methods and approaches for adapting education processes for the student with special needs. It introduces adapted and commercially developed materials for instruction. Curriculum organization and evaluation for programming purposes are included. The course focuses on the child with mild-moderate learning differences (e.g. learning disabilities), with limited discussion of adaptations for the child with severe disabilities. Computer-based instruction, the role of adapting and modifying instruction, the role of adapting and modifying instruction, and collaborative consultation are presented in the course. Students participate in a 60-hour field experience in a special education setting.

Taken from the Undergraduate Information Booklet for the College of Education, Department of Special Education

Description of other courses referred to in study:

Sociocultural Influences on Learning – Human Learning in multisocial, multilingual, and multicultural contexts; realities of society and their impact on learning; social concerns such as prejudice, stereotyping, cross-cultural attitudes, bilingual issues, parent and community involvement. Three lecture hours and three laboratory hours a week for one semester. Offered on the letter-grade basis only.

CLD Students with Disabilities - This introductory course is designed to provide an overview of issues, trends and emerging practices related to students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds in general and special education programs. The primary goal is to increase awareness and understanding

of the relationships between culture, language and disability, so that educators can make informed decisions concerning services provided CLD children, youth and adults with disabilities. A broad range of topics will be reviewed and discussed including: cultural variability, linguistic and dialectal differences, developing partnerships with families, school reform, prereferral intervention, identification and assessment, educational planning, placement alternatives, and implications for ongoing professional development.

Appendix C

Demographic Profile

My name is Laura Dominguez and I am a Doctoral student in Multicultural Special Education. I would deeply appreciate it if you took the time to respond to the following questions. The information you provide will be used solely for the purposes of the research study to be conducted for my dissertation. The information you provide will be kept confidential. Your permission will be requested if any personal information is to be shared.

Name _____ **Date** _____

Section I – Personal Data

1. Age _____ 2. Gender _____(M/F)

3. What ethnic groups are represented in your family? _____

a. Of the ethnic groups named above, with which do you most identify? _____

4. Do you know any language other than English? Yes No If yes, which language(s)? _____

For the four communication skills listed below, check the level of proficiency which best describes your ability to function in the language other than English you identified above. (If you are multilingual, select the language other than English in which you are most proficient.)

a. listening:	____ beginner	____ intermediate	____ advanced	____fluent
b. speaking:	____ beginner	____ intermediate	____ advanced	____fluent
c. reading:	____ beginner	____ intermediate	____ advanced	____fluent
d. writing:	____ beginner	____ intermediate	____ advanced	____fluent

5. List the type of job(s) you have held since you began working, including any job in high school or during the summer (ex. Clerical, food service, etc.)

a. _____ c. _____
b. _____ d. _____

6. What was your mother's primary occupation when you were growing up? _____
7. What was your father's primary occupation when you were growing up? _____
8. Below each of the categories listed, <u>circle</u> the term that best describes the neighborhood <u>where you grew up.</u>

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Economic Status</u>	<u>Location</u>
mostly Asian	mostly upper income	urban
mostly African American	mostly middle income	suburban
mostly Hispanic	mostly lower income	rural
mostly American Indian	mixture of _____	
mostly Euro-American		
other _____		
mixture of _____		

9. Below each of the categories listed, circle the term that best describes the neighborhood where you currently live.

Ethnicity	Economic Status	Location
mostly Asian	mostly upper income	urban
mostly African American	mostly middle income	suburban
mostly Hispanic	mostly lower income	rural
mostly American Indian	mixture of _____	
mostly Euro-American		
other _____		
mixture of _____		

10. Circle the phrase that best identifies the diversity among your circle of friends at the following times:

Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Currently
mostly Asian	mostly Asian	mostly Asian	mostly Asian
mostly African Am.	mostly African Am.	mostly African Am.	mostly African Am.
mostly Hispanic	mostly Hispanic	mostly Hispanic	mostly Hispanic
mostly Am. Indian	mostly Am. Indian	mostly Am. Indian	mostly Am. Indian
mostly Euro-Am.	mostly Euro-Am.	mostly Euro-Am.	mostly Euro-Am.
other _____	other _____	other _____	other _____
mixture of _____	mixture of _____	mixture of _____	mixture of _____

Section II – Contact with Diverse Groups

11. For each category listed below, circle the type of school, the ethnicity of the student population, and the ethnicity of the teachers in the schools you attended. If you attended more than one school during the grade levels listed, think of the one in which you spent the most time, and then respond.

	Type of School	**Ethnicity of Students**	**Ethnicity of Teachers**
Elementary School	a. public b. private	mostly Asian mostly African Am. mostly Hispanic mostly Am. Indian mostly Euro-Am. other _____ mixture of _____	mostly Asian mostly African Am. mostly Hispanic mostly Am. Indian mostly Euro-Am. other _____ mixture of _____
Middle School	a. public b. private	mostly Asian mostly African Am. mostly Hispanic mostly Am. Indian mostly Euro-Am. other _____ mixture of _____	mostly Asian mostly African Am. mostly Hispanic mostly Am. Indian mostly Euro-Am. other _____ mixture of _____
High School	a. public b. private	mostly Asian mostly African Am. mostly Hispanic mostly Am. Indian mostly Euro-Am. other _____ mixture of _____	mostly Asian mostly African Am. mostly Hispanic mostly Am. Indian mostly Euro-Am. other _____ mixture of _____

12. On the following page, circle the frequency of your contact with ethnic group(s) different from your own, during the listed time periods and indicate whether the experiences were generally positive, neutral, or negative. Do not circle a response under the nature of the contact if the frequency for that group is never.

Period	Asian	African American	Hispanic	American Indian	Euro-American
Elementary School	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative
Middle School	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative
High School	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative
Currently	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative	**Frequency** a. daily b. often c. occasionally d. rarely e. never **Nature** Generally: a. positive b. neutral c. negative

Section III - Program Information

13. What classes have you taken in your teacher preparation program that will help you be a better teacher?

Class	Semester	Instructor
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

14. What classes have you taken in your teacher preparation program that will help you work with culturally and linguistically diverse students?

Class	Semester	Instructor
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

15. What school, grade level(s), subject/content area, and setting (Self-contained, Resource, Content Mastery, etc.) have your field experiences been with?

School _____ Grade(s) ___ Subject area(s) _____ Setting _____

School _____ Grade(s) ___ Subject area(s) _____ Setting _____

School _____ Grade(s) ___ Subject area(s) _____ Setting _____

16. For each category listed below, circle the phrase that best describes the majority of students you have worked with thus far.

Ethnicity
mostly Asian
mostly African American
mostly Hispanic
mostly American Indian
mostly Euro-American
other _____
mixture of _____

Economic Status
mostly upper income
mostly middle income
mostly lower income
mixture of _____

Appendix D

Consent Form
Special Education Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of their Readiness to Serve Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Students

You are invited to participate in a study of the perceptions of readiness of special education student teachers to serve culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in their classroom. My name is Laura Dominguez and I am a doctoral candidate in Multicultural Special Education. This study will fulfill the dissertation requirement of my Ph.D. I hope to learn about your experiences in the special education teacher preparation program and how well you think you have been prepared to work with CLD exceptional students. You were selected as a possible participant because you will be completing your student teaching requirement in special education this semester. Of those who indicate an interest, a group of 4-5 student teachers will be selected to participate in the study.

If you decide to participate, I would like to conduct two interviews with you, one at the beginning and one at the end of your student teaching placement. These interviews should take about an hour to an hour and a half. The interviews will be audio taped so that I may have them transcribed after the interview. A pseudonym of your choice will be used to ensure your confidentiality. The person who will transcribe the interviews and I will be the only people who will hear the tapes. The tapes will be kept in a secure location during the study and retained for possible future analysis. I will be asking you to discuss your experiences with people from cultural, racial, and/or ethnic backgrounds different from your own. It is possible that some questions may raise some emotionally charged issues. You are free to choose not to answer any question at any time throughout the study. After each interview, I will write a summary of the main ideas we discuss to make sure that my understanding of the information you share is accurate. You will have the opportunity to correct anything I misunderstand at that point and before the draft is finalized for analysis.

I would also like to come to your classroom once a week to observe you interactions with the students in your class. After each observation, I would like to talk with you briefly to get your feedback about the lesson, as well as give you the opportunity to share anything that you wish to with me. Although I would like to debrief with you as soon after the interview as possible, these debriefing sessions will be scheduled at your convenience.

Consent Form - Continued
Special Education Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of their Readiness to Serve Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Students

Being a former university supervisor, I know that your supervisor will give you written feedback when he/she comes to observe you. I would like to have a copy of this feedback when you get it, so that I can get a better understanding of your interaction with the students in your classroom while I am not able to be there myself. I would also like a copy of the self-evaluations that you complete at mid-term and at the end of your student teaching. This information will also remain confidential and will be used only for the purposes of adding to our discussions.

There are no risks or discomforts expected from participating in this study. I hope that any inconveniences due to the time required will be minimal. Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

Your decision to participate or not will not affect your future relations with The University of Texas at Austin or Austin Independent School District. Your participation in this study will also have no bearing on your final evaluation and information shared will not be included in your placement file. You may discontinue your participation at any time.

An extra copy of this form is included to ensure that you have a copy for your records. If you have any questions at any time about the study, please contact me at 291-8111 (home) or 841-6869 (work) and I will be happy to answer them as quickly as possible. You may also contact my faculty sponsor, Shernaz B. García, Ph.D., at 471-4161. Thank you for considering taking part in this study.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate in the study. If you later decide that you do not want to participate, simply tell me. You may discontinue your participation in this study at any time.

_____
Printed Name of Participant

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date

_____ _____
Signature of Investigator Date

Appendix E

Initial Interview Guide

1. How did you get into education? Or how did you decide to become a teacher?

How/Why did you decide to become a special education teacher (or also certified in special education)?

What has been the most fulfilling aspect of working with the students you have had so far?

Where did you do your internship?

Tell me more about working with a regular education class.

What has been the most challenging aspect of working with the students you have had so far?

2. Tell me about your undergraduate program.

What classes did you take that discussed working with CLD students?

Who was the instructor?

What types of activities did you do in that class?

Can you describe some of the assignments you feel helped prepare you to be a better teacher? How did they help?

Tell me about the field experiences you had.

You mentioned that you worked at _____. Tell me about the school, students, the placements, the teachers, etc.

What about _____? How did that school compare with _____?

Did you have the opportunity to meet any parents of the students you were working with?
How did you meet them? How did that go?

Tell me about the class you were assigned to? Tell me about the students in your class.

In what ways is the group of students you are working with now similar or different than the field experiences you have had thus far?

How do you feel about your placement?

What are your expectations for the semester?

3. In the demographic profile you completed, you identified yourself as _____.

Can you tell me why you feel that way?

Which racial or ethnic groups are you more familiar with? What group are you the most comfortable working with?

What do you think makes for this difference?

Culture is one of those words that can be defined in many different ways. What does the term culture mean to you? (ask only if it doesn't come up in any other question)

What effect does culture have on your behavior and your students' behavior?

4. When you prepared for your student teaching, what do you feel are the 3 most important characteristics of an effective teacher (of CLD students) needs to have?

What are the 3 most important qualities of a successful student?

Do you think that is true for all students?

What factors do you think influence how well students will do in school?

What qualities do you posses that will make you a successful teacher (in a CLD classroom)?

Where did those qualities come from? Why are those qualities important?

List 3 terms that best describe CLD students and their families? Why do you believe that?

What other knowledge and skills do you think you'll need to be an effective teacher (in a CLD classroom)? Why do you think that's important?

At this point, how prepared do you feel to work with CLD students?

What else do you think you need to know to be an effective teacher of CLD students?

5. Where do you plan to teach when you graduate? _____ Why?

Given the demographics of many of today's schools, how do you feel about working with diverse students?

Is there anything else you would like to add before we stop?

Appendix F

Excerpt from Initial Interview with Michelle

Laura: So, at this point, how prepared do you feel to work with diverse students?

Michelle: I would say, maybe…a lot more prepared than when I first stepped in, you know, into UT. And when I first decided to go into education. But, I feel somewhat prepared. It's just most of my intern and my student teaching so far have been with children of different cultural…different cultures than me, myself, so that has prepared me a lot, because otherwise I would never really have that much interaction, as far as like teaching them. It has helped me with like my internships, actually teaching them, actually working with them. I mean, I feel somewhat prepared. More than 50%, but there is just some part of me, that is just a little nervous about, you know…

Laura: Is there any group that you feel more comfortable with?

Michelle: Not really……Kids are kids. You know, but there are those things that I don't ever want to, in my teaching, I don't ever want to…make them feel that they are left out or don't ever want to offend them in any kind of way or just not be sensitive to them. I am really scared of that. Being sensitive and not knowing all about their culture and what is going on with them. So, that's just one thing, I am just really scared of not doing everything I should do, or I don't know…

Laura: Whenever you filled out that demographic profile for me you identified yourself as American.

Michelle: Yeah.

Laura: Can you tell me how you choose that term?

Michelle: Well, I just…well my family is…my grandparents are from Ireland, and my Dad's really big on our Irish history and…Irish… I can identify with that, but I also see myself as an American. I grew up in America…I, so much, identify with American culture.

Laura: How would you describe American culture?

Michelle: I don't know. It is so hard for me to actually define culture. I don't…

Laura: Because that is one of my other questions. How would you define culture?

Michelle: It is hard, I think……Yeah. I have never actually thought about you know, how I see American culture. I just, I don't know if you can actually say there is an American culture, I just feel that there are…I think I just identify…because I don't want to say, "Oh, I am Irish American." I don't. Because I…. I can't... It is hard for me. These are questions I am going to have to think about……I'm not really sure what's behind it…

Laura: So you don't have a way to define culture at this point?

Michelle: It is almost like a way of doing things, a way of living. I mean there is so much. You know you could just say of course, like.. I think it is almost if you…you know, how your community… it has to be more than one person. I mean there is an individual part of it of course, but then you have to have a group that almost…well you can really identify with. And you know you might have the same beliefs or values, or religion. But there is just, I see it as like so many little, little cultures almost. That you….can identify with…..Like the words you use, but then when you stop and think about what does it really mean.

Laura: How do you think it affects your behavior? Do you think it affects it?

Michelle: I think it could…Yeah, I think it can. I mean, I think, maybe, how you are raised, you know, has to do a lot with your culture, or your own family's beliefs, I think that can effect behavior a lot. Just you know how the kids might behave at school, and how they might interact with the teacher or…

Appendix G

Observation Running Notes

Informant _____Date _____ Time _____ Grade _____

Subject being Taught _____ Number of Students in class _____

Appendix H

Observation Running Notes

Informant ____Victoria_____Date __3/5__ Time __10:00___ Grade __PK__

Subject being Taught ____Small group_____ Number of Students in class __10__

Small group time – Amanda, Cyrus, Ben, Cory

Went over rules for small group/moved trays after Cory ripped paper from his___ tray

Read book, showed pictures of farm animals made out of diff. shapes.

Put out trays w/outlines of shapes, Cyrus finished 1st, got to do animals out of___ shapes, Ben finished, CT went to help w/Cory after ST redirected many times,___ told ST not to take offense, need to split up the group next time,

CT worked w/Cory while ST worked w/Ben, Cyrus & Amanda

Cory needed hand over hand, ST helped Ben make animals, 2 minute warning, time to clean up, "Good Job" "Cyrus, you did a great job cleaning up

New group – Ryan (W/M), Josh (W/M), Gabriel (H/M), Joey

Went over rules, read book, asked many questions, to all students, Joey distracted, messing with fingers, gave out trays, explained activity

Joey finished 1st, Gabriel, asked if they were ready, Joey said very strongly,_____ Gabriel said too, Joshua said it too, much harder to understand, Ryan, easier to___ understand, Lots of praise, ST" Isn't this fun? This is so much fun, these just keep getting harder and you all are doing such a good job"

Gabriel & Joey could ask for the number of the shapes they needed – G & J got to do next sheet, much harder, asked Joshua to finish before he went to next sheet__

Group cleaned up quickly,

Next group came to mat before being called, had to go back, CT – "Always join the line at the end" – read rules, asked if they wanted to add any rules – all came up with a new one, - Read book, all guessed animals, guessed good, read whole book making animals, - told them they would need to ask for shapes they needed Students cold ask for # and shape they needed
Would hold out a handful of shapes & they would pick out what they needed
"you know what shape you need" – S said triangle, Cleaned up

Notes from Follow-up Session:
Cory – MR, AA, Ryan, Alexis, Amanda (W/F), Cyrus, ???(H/AA/M), Ben (W/M) Inclusion student Cody, red hair, Joey also inc. Alexis – taller w/straight dark hair/bob, Nick (H/M), Amanda w/curls (W/F), Jessica small, (H/F), Amanda's mom is 2nd grade teacher at school, blond hair
Joshua is in speech, so harder to understand him
Others inclusion, Amanda, Cody, Joey, have to modify for them, so much higher
Cory – been hard to work with, CT sends him to green chair, she has been working with him mostly
Inclusion kids – parents pay for them to come, like their daycare, works out good for parents who have other kids in the school, good for others to be around non - disabled students

Observation Running Notes

Informant ____Beth_____Date __4/1__ Time __9:00___ Grade __5th_____

Subject being Taught ____Lang. Arts_____ Number of Students in class __6____

Disaster Drill – 5th grade did not do good, talking/giggling, would not be quiet, addressed by Principal

Worksheet – short vowel sounds – class, very controlled, went over words, saying which ones were short vowel sounds – called on students individually, then said could answer together, all did very appropriately, had packet to work on, asked if they could do it, all ended up saying they could w/encouragement.

Made David (H/M) look at her – being smart aleck, said it wasn't nice, a little rude,

ST appears very comfortable with all students (3AA, 2W, 1H)

Going over WS together, Backstop – ST had to explain to Tommy what it was, I said I didn't know either, ST – from years of playing softball, Octavia & Amanda working well together – only had back & stop left – Amanda said backstop like she didn't know what it was & Octavia said it has to be because that was all there was left – someone else did not know what dishrag & eggplant were (backhand in tennis)(dustpan) – handcuffs s's started talking about being arrested, ST told Tommy she hoped that did not happen to him & then said class was not going to talk about police stuff.

Backhand – Amanda said it was a slap, said she never got one, but her brothers did

Tommy – can I tell you a story? Said to remember & tell her during break –

Dustpan – Milton – told him what it was, he said I have a dustpan, ST – "Would you get credit for that? Come on you have to show you know what it is – come up with a good sentence", very encouraging, high expectations, helped him be successful.

Students went to specials – discussed questions had written down earlier

Met with any parents? (no, letting [CT] do parental contact – had to call? (no)

(Melinda – pink note signed by mom)

Attended ARDS? (not yet) Goals/IEPs?

How are things w/Tim? (pink slip, won't be able to go to Seaworld, yelling across the room to Melinda, told both they could not talk to each other today)

Any other challenging students? Ask about Matthew (seems to be annoying at times)

Plans for next year? (need recommendation, hopes to get a job at [school name] but if not, at least in area

11:15 – students coming late from specials, got students started so they would have enough time, explained each group's task, finishing newspaper – had advertising, comics, illustration, on computers, most students on task or seemed to be waiting for help – ST praised efforts, circulated between groups

Comment from sub for CT – ST was very patient

Notes from Follow-up Session:

Disaster drill – important b/c last fall there was tornados & kids were kept

- Words, thought they would know some, or most, she knew backstop 'cause she had played softball – sad they wanted to talk about being arrested, like they knew people who had, so it was not a big deal – also that they thought backhand was a slap, not a tennis swing, She grew up lucky, not rich, but she knew her parents cared.

Appendix I

Excerpt from Reflexive Journal

1/12- Isabel's case study, a little easier since this is the second one. She says many things that make her sound like she needs to rescue the poor minority kids. They live in unstructured homes, with parents who aren't around, little supervision, lower SES, get to run the streets late at night - "My students, I loved…I loved working at lower SES schools."

Remember Victoria also only liked working in low SES schools because her efforts were appreciated there. Will have to check on Beth and Michelle, know that all said they want to continue to work in diverse schools, Isabel even afraid of interviewing in school with high white population and recognized and exemplary ratings because the level of parental involvement would be very high.

1/13 – working on Isabel's summary – trying to not interpret too much. There were some things I wish I would have had her expand on. I am hoping that if I misinterpreted anything she will tell me. Mailed Michelle's case study draft to her today. She has been the only one who really made any changes. I hope she does on the case study. It seems now their feedback is even more important. I hope the others will take the time to let me know their level of comfort with what I wrote. It seems like such an awesome responsibility to try to put their feelings in words.

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Vita

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